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Canada

FEBRUARY 1930

THE BLUE BOOK

MAGAZINE
(ILLUSTRATED)

TARZAN

AT THE EARTH'S CORE

by *Edgar Rice*
BURROUGHS

"DRAGOONS OF THE AIR"

The Amazing True Story of
the Kosciusko Squadron

\$ 500.⁰⁰

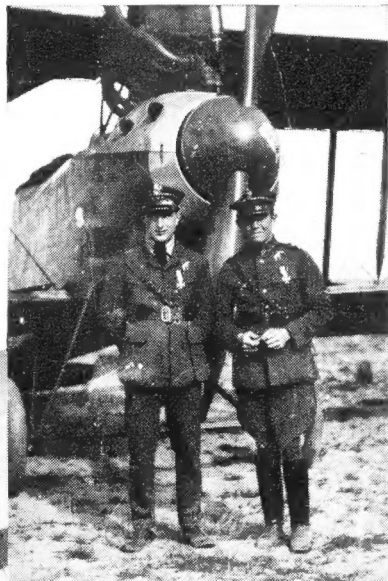
IN CASH PRIZES
FOR REAL EXPERIENCES

The KOSCIUSKO SQUADRON

*Don't miss their extraordinary true story,
on later pages of this issue*



At the left is Major Cedric Fauntleroy, a member of Rickenbacker's "Hat-in-the-Ring" squadron in the World War and later commander-in-chief of the Kosciusko Squadron. At the right are Captain Corsi and Lt. Chess on the flying field at Lemberg



Above is a snapshot of Lt. Chess taking off from the snow-covered field at Lemberg. The Kosciusko men had to fight not only the Russians but the tremendous difficulties of flying antiquated machines from rough fields covered with snow and ice



At the left is a photograph taken after the farewell dinner in Paris before the Kosciusko Squadron set out for their great adventure on the frontiers of Poland. The celebrated pianist Paderewski, then premier of Poland, is bidding them good-bye

...Raised His Pay \$4800* After Reading This Amazing Book Which Is Now *FREE!*

* Based on the combined experiences of F. B. Englehardt, Chattanooga, Tenn., A. F. Thompson, Sioux City, Iowa, L. D. Mather, E. Cleveland, Ohio, and many others.



Caught in a Rut

I wonder I put up with it as long as I did! Every day was filled with nothing but deadly routine and monotonous detail. No freedom or independence. No chance to get out and meet people, travel, nor have interesting experiences. I was just like a cog in a big machine with poor prospects of ever being anything more.



Long, Tiresome Hours

Every hour of the day I was under somebody's supervision. The TIME-CLOCK constantly laid in wait for me—a monument to unfulfilled hopes and dying ambition. Four times a day, promptly on the dot, it hurled its silent challenge at my self-respect, reminding me how unimportant I was and how little I really COUNTED in the business and social world!



Low Pay

Paid just enough to keep going—but never enough to enjoy any of the GOOD things of life every man DESERVES for his family and himself. Always economizing and pinching pennies. Always wondering what I would do if I were laid off or lost my job. Always uncertain and apprehensive of the future.



Desperate

Happened to get a look at the payroll one day and was astonished to see what big salaries went to the sales force. Found that salesman Brown made \$200 a week—and Jenkins \$275! Would have given my right arm to make money that fast, but never dreamed I had any "gift" for salesmanship.



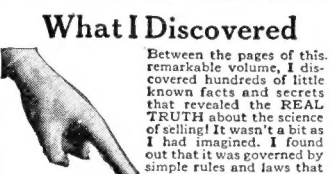
A Ray of Light

Stumbled across an article on salesmanship in a magazine that evening. Was surprised to discover that salesmen were made and not "born" as I had foolishly believed. Read about a former cowpuncher, Wm. Shore of California, making \$525 in one week after learning the ins-and-outs of scientific salesmanship. Decided that if HE could do it, so could I!



The Turning Point

My first step was to write for a certain little book which a famous business genius has called "THE MOST AMAZING BOOK EVER PRINTED". It wasn't a very big book, but it certainly opened my eyes to things I had never dreamed of—and proved the turning point of my entire career!



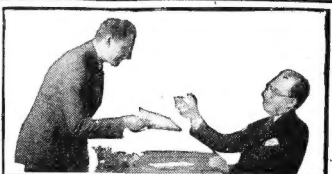
What I Discovered

Between the pages of this remarkable volume, I discovered hundreds of little known facts and secrets that revealed the REAL TRUTH about the science of selling! It wasn't a bit as I had imagined. I found out that it was governed by simple rules and laws that almost ANY man can master as easily as he learned the alphabet. I even learned how to go about getting into this "highest paid of all professions". I found out exactly how Mark Barichievich of San Francisco was enabled to quit his \$8 a week job as a restaurant worker and start making \$125 a week as a salesman; and how C. W. Birmingham of Dayton, Ohio, jumped from \$15 a week to \$7500 a year—these and hundreds of others! It certainly was a revelation!



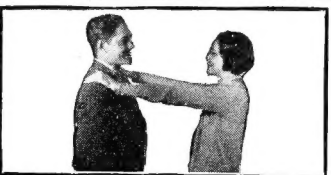
FREE Employment Service

Furthermore, I discovered that the National Salesmen's Training Association, which published the book, also operates a most effective employment service! Last year they received requests from all over the U. S. and Canada for more than 50,000 salesmen trained by their method. This service is FREE to both members and employers and thousands have secured positions this way!



Making Good At Last!

It didn't take me long to decide to cast my lot with N. S. T. A.—and after a few weeks I had mastered the secrets of Modern Salesmanship during spare time, without losing a day or a dollar from my old job. When I was ready, the Employment Manager found me over a dozen good openings to choose from—and I selected one which paid me over \$70 a week to start!



Was It Worth It?

Today my salary is \$4800 greater than ever before! No more punching time-clocks or worrying over dimes and quarters! NOW my services are in REAL DEMAND with bigger prospects for the future than I ever dared HOPE for back in those days when I was just another "name" on a pay-roll!



Get Your Copy FREE

Right now the book—"The Key to Master Salesmanship"—which banished all my fears and troubles and showed me how to get started on the road to success and independence—will be mailed as a gift to any ambitious man, absolutely FREE. And since there is no obligation, why not see for yourself what amazing facts it contains! Just mail the coupon now—for there is no better way in the world to invest a 2-cent stamp! I KNOW!

National Salesmen's Training Assn., Dept. B-32, N. S. T. A. Bldg., Chicago, Ill.
Without obligation, please send me a free copy of "The Key To Master Salesmanship."

Name Address

Town State

Age Occupation

THE BLUE BOOK

FEBRUARY, 1930

Cover Design: Painted by Frank Hoban to illustrate "Tarzan at the Earth's Core."
Frontispiece: "Songs of Sea and Trail: VII—"Sam Bass." Drawn by W. O. Kling.

Two Remarkable Novels

Tarzan at the Earth's Core By Edgar Rice Burroughs 28

Specially stirring episodes in this absorbing saga of the world's greatest adventurer. (Illustrated by Frank Hoban.)

The Mountain Sheriff By Raymond S. Spears 112

Further quaint chapters in a picturesque story that recalls your delight in Mark Twain. (Illustrated by W. O. Kling.)

A Chronicle of Courage

Dragoons of the Air By Norman Hall 74

How an airplane sank a transport, and many other amazing achievements of the Americans of the Kosciuszko Squadron. (Illustrated by J. Fleming Gould.)

Captivating Short Stories

The Chief of the Pegasus By Norman Reilly Raine 7

The wreck of a man—yet he won a desperate battle and prevented another war. (Illustrated by L. R. Gustavson.)

The Indestructible Lady By Bertram Atkey 17

Another amusing chapter in the sinful progress of two somehow-lovable rascals. (Illustrated by Frank Hoban.)

The Coast Guardsman By W. E. Carleton 45

Nowadays the men who watch our stormy Atlantic seaboard have a complex and exciting job—as this story well attests. (Illustrated by William Molt.)

Alexander's One-man Band By Arthur K. Akers 54

A joyous story of colored folks getting themselves into trouble in their own fantastic fashion. (Illustrated by Everett Lowry.)

The Dog of It By Reg Dinsmore 63

The story of a dog with a soul of his own, and of a great sled-race. (Illustrated by Lee Townsend.)

Beyond the Llano By Frederick Bechdolt 94

The old wild days in California live again in this picturesque and spirited story. (Illustrated by Paul Lehman.)

THE McCALL COMPANY, Publisher, The Blue Book Magazine

JOHN C. STERLING
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Editor

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MAGAZINE

Vol. 50, No. 4

Special Notice to Writers and Artists:
Manuscripts and art material submitted for publication in The Blue Book Magazine will only be received on the understanding that the publisher and editors shall not be responsible for loss or injury thereto while such manuscripts or art material are in the publisher's possession or in transit.

Special Note: Each issue of The Blue Book Magazine is copyrighted. Any republication of the matter appearing in the magazine, either wholly or in part, is not permitted except by special authorization.

Cyrano of the Legion By Warren Hastings Miller 104

A very gallant gentleman involved Hell's Angels in a battle—and himself gave much to win it. (Illustrated by Paul Lehman.)

Free Lances in Diplomacy By Clarence Herbert New 138

"The Carmanian Crisis" describes one of the most eventful and important of all their exploits. (Illustrated by J. Fleming Gould.)

Richelieu III By Ewing Walker 152

Here we have a notably attractive tale of old Kentucky and her favorite sport of horse-racing. (Illustrated by William Molt.)

An Engrossing Novelette

Six Bombs By Seven Anderton 162

The post-graduate newspaper man who gave us "The Hell Bender" is at his best in this unusual detective story. (Illustrated by Allen Moir Dean.)

Prize Stories of Real Experience

A Midnight Sortie By Charles H. Watts 184

An artilleryman's greatest war adventure.

A Hand-to-Claw Battle By Bryan Shults 187

Unarmed, and attacked by two savage bears.

The Defeat of the Datu By Lieutenant Cogswell 189

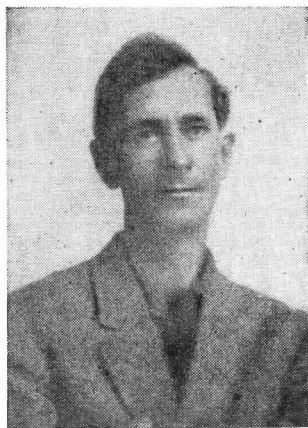
An army officer's stirring experience in the Philippines.

S. O. S. By John Conahey 193

How an "unsinkable" ship was torpedoed—and how the survivors were saved.

The Hot Fuse By Brooks Davis 194

Caught in a mine with the blasting fuses lighted.



Frederick R. Bechdolt

This favorite writer knows the West old and new as do few other men; his stories ring true because they are true—to the facts and the spirit of the pioneer folk he so ably portrays. "Beyond the Llano" (beginning on page 94 of this issue) is an excellent example of his colorfully graphic fiction. And next month we will offer you a story we believe the best he has ever written under the title—

"The Hazardous Highway"

How do you measure up —by the dollar sign?

JUST how big a man are you? Not how big do you count yourself—but how do others size you up?

No use fooling yourself. The one measure is the dollar sign. It's the measure of a man in business, and many times outside of it.

The man who fills the ordinary job where a dozen applicants fight for every position is mighty small when measured by his weekly pay check.

There is only one excuse for being in this class—it's lack of initiative, lack of courage to make a decision, to make a start, and keep on going. Money cost and time cost are so small they don't count.

Thousands upon thousands of men have increased their incomes in comparatively short time through LaSalle Home Study Business Training.

So can you, BUT—

You can't unless you will. Training is no magic wand that transforms you overnight. But it's the surest, soundest, quickest method of making a man measure bigger by the dollar sign that modern business has yet developed.

Any question in your mind about it? Then read what follows—stories from actual life—three cases out of thousands like them in our files.

Changed Zero Rating Into Big Success

He stood in front of a bank in a southern town, when we first met him—just about as discouraged as a human being could be.

For one month—after giving up a routine position in a bank—he had been trying his hand at selling life insurance. Standing there in the rain, he was now trying to summon enough courage to ask for his old job back again!

"I can't talk with you about enrolling with LaSalle," said he; "I couldn't pay for the training if I took it."

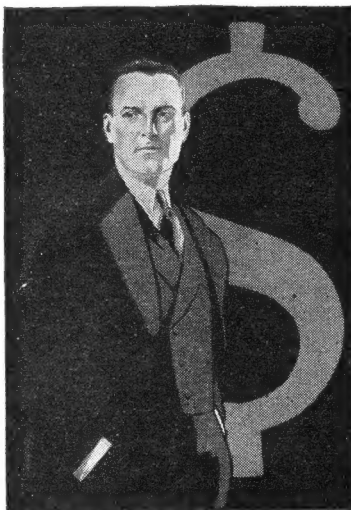
Nevertheless, he *did* talk with us—on our promise not to enroll him at that time, even if he asked us to. And later, of his own accord, he sent in his enrollment!

Result: Today—only six years later—he is area supervisor for a great insurance company—his territory embracing an entire state. During those five years he has increased his income approximately 500 percent—and in a recent letter he adds this line: "*Much of my success I attribute to the principles of salesmanship so ably presented by LaSalle Extension University.*"

He Turned a Laugh Into Envy

They laughed at him when he enrolled for training in Higher Accountancy—the other boys in the Indiana drug store where he worked as a prescription clerk. They kept on laughing as he studied in his spare hours that summer—they enjoyed themselves evenings while he worked.

But they didn't laugh ten months later, for at that time he secured a bookkeeping position at



a salary bigger than either he or they had ever received—nor did they laugh when he got his C. P. A. degree three years later and then went on to open his own public accounting office and earn five or six times what he had earned as a drug clerk.

Doubled His Income Rating

The third man was repairing air brakes in the car shops of a mid-western railroad—a fine, loyal worker, 36 years old—when he enrolled for Modern Foremanship five years ago. Eight months later, his measure under the dollar sign went up 28 percent and he was made Supply Foreman. It went up again and again as he became Chief Car Inspector—first at one point, then another and another—each job more important than the one before. Today he rates more than 100 percent higher than at the start and, better yet, he is marked by his superiors as a "comer."

If You Really Want to Succeed, Read This and Act I Can—I Will. That is the slogan on which LaSalle has built for twenty years: the basis on which these four men—and hundreds of thousands of others—have built their remarkable progress.

You can—if you will.

Below is a coupon—a coupon which, filled in, clipped and mailed, will bring you two interesting booklets; one, "Ten Years' Promotion in One," the other describing in detail the LaSalle plan for progress in the field of your choice. LaSalle will send both of them to you free.

You want a bigger success. Are you willing to do your part—to start by finding out about the training available? Then mail the coupon NOW.

----- Find Yourself Through LaSalle! -----

LaSalle Extension University

The World's Largest Business Training Institution

Dept. 2369-R

Chicago

I would welcome an outline of the LaSalle plan, together with a copy of "Ten Years' Promotion in One," all without obligation.

- | | |
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| <input type="checkbox"/> Business Management | <input type="checkbox"/> Law—Degree of LL. B. |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Modern Salesmanship | <input type="checkbox"/> Commercial Law |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Higher Accountancy | <input type="checkbox"/> Credit and Collection |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Traffic Management | <input type="checkbox"/> Correspondence |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Railway Station Management | <input type="checkbox"/> Industrial Management |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Banking and Finance | <input type="checkbox"/> Modern Foremanship |
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| <input type="checkbox"/> Business English | <input type="checkbox"/> Expert Bookkeeping |
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| | <input type="checkbox"/> Stenography—Stenotypy |
| | <input type="checkbox"/> Railway Accounting |
| | <input type="checkbox"/> Paper Salesmanship |

Name.....

Present Position.....

Address.....

Wild Heritage

DRAGONS, unicorns, leviathans, tremendous terrible beasts of all sorts are described in the folklore of nearly all peoples—Chinese and Hebrew, Indian and African, European and Malay. Imaginary? Not at all. Your scientist carefully compares and investigates—and reports that these stories of strange fearful creatures, handed down from father to son through many generations, are merely descriptions of the great monsters that once actually did inhabit this now tamed earth of ours—monsters like the mammoth that was found nearly intact in the ice of Siberia, like the saber-toothed tigers whose skeletons have been preserved for us in the asphalt of California, or the still more primitive beasts whose fossil bones have been dug up in many parts of the world.

The memory and intuitive dread of the prehistoric animals are graven deep in our brains; and so stories dealing with the creatures of the wilderness wake within us primordial thrills powerful indeed. That is why, probably, the stories of Tarzan, unique in their re-creation of primeval life, have an unparalleled attraction for most of us.

That is why, moreover, other stories dealing with battle, violence and outdoor adventure of all kinds give a wholesome delight to the most civilized of us. Why we so enjoy, for example, Warren Miller's stories of his Hell's Angels Squad in their savage Saharan conflicts, why,

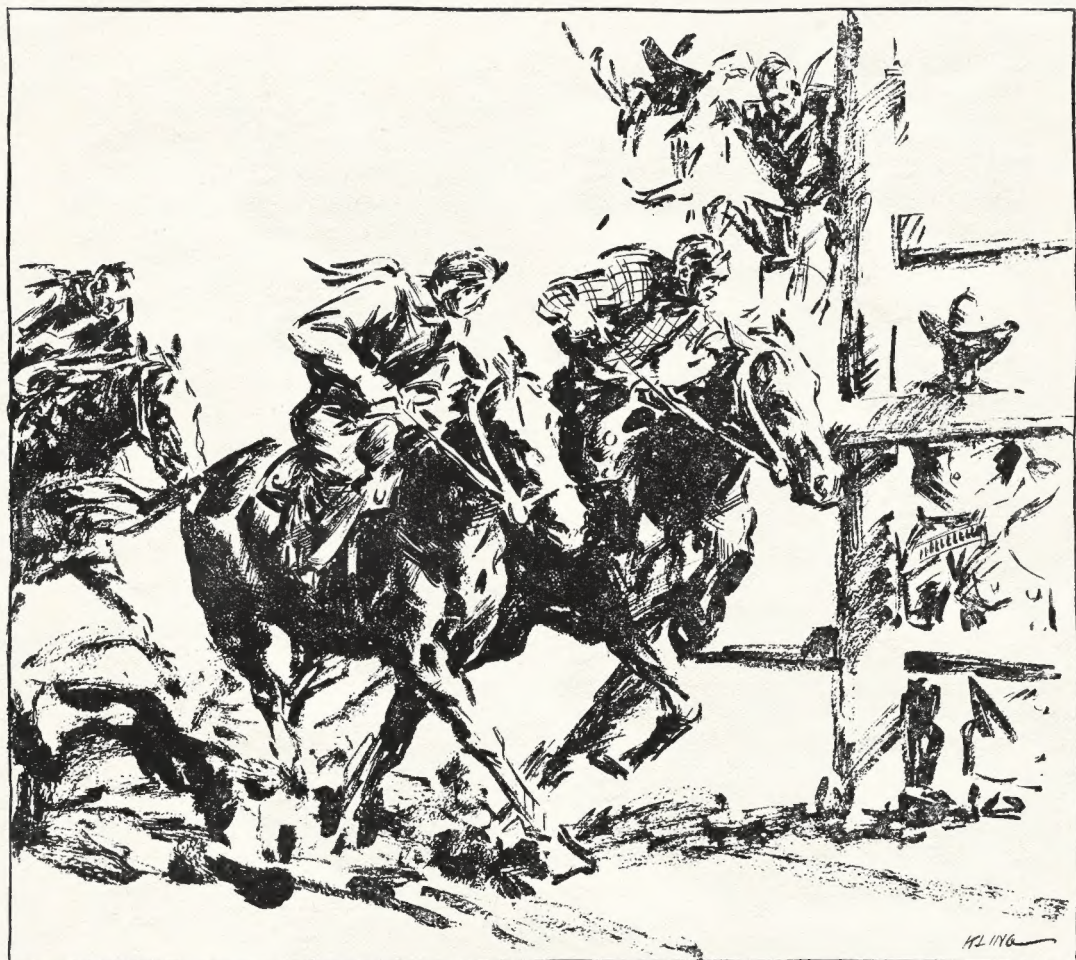
in stories of actual fact, we take so much interest in a chronicle of desperate warfare like Norman Hall's history of the Kosciuszko Squadron "Dragoons of the Air."

Close under the surface, indeed, we are very primitive folk; and that is well, for the simple, normal things are mostly wholesome. You will find many other stories in this issue which recognize these facts and which you are therefore sure to enjoy. And in the next number likewise.

In this next, the March number, for example, Tarzan's extraordinary adventure among the primitive men and beasts of weird Pellucidar comes to its terrific climax. Again in fiction the Foreign Legion and in fact the Kosciuszko Squadron will bring to you the warrior thrill of combat. And a colorful romance by that favorite BLUE BOOK writer Frederick Bechdolt will give you a share in a splendid history of love and battle on the California coast.

Nor will our more sophisticated tastes be neglected. Clarence Herbert New will offer one of the best of those dramas of international intrigue "Free Lances in Diplomacy"; Bertram Atkey will contribute a specially amusing episode in the light-hearted lives of the Easy Street experts; Arthur Akers will give us a rollicking colored comedy; and there will be many other stories to persuade you to agree with us that the March issue is something no reader should miss.

—The Editor.



Drawn by W. O. Kling

SONGS OF SEA AND TRAIL

VII—"Sam Bass"

Sam Bass was born in Indiana; it was his native home,
And at the age of seventeen young Sam began to roam.
Sam first came out to Texas a cowboy for to be—
A kinder-hearted fellow you'd seldom ever see.

Sam used to deal in race stock, one called the Denton mare.
He matched her in scrub races, and took her to the Fair.
Sam used to coin the money and spent it just as free.
He always drank good whisky wherever he might be.

Sam's life was short in Texas; three robberies did he do.
He robbed all the passenger, express and mail cars too.

Sam had four companions—four bold and daring lads—
Richardson and Jackson, Joe Collins, and Old Dad;
Sam met his fate at Round Rock, July the twenty-first,
They pierced poor Sam with rifle-balls and emptied out his purse. . . .

Jim had borrowed Sam's good gold and didn't want to pay,
The only shot he saw was to give poor Sam away.
He sold out Sam and Barnes, and left their friends to mourn.
Oh, what a scorching Jim will get when Gabriel blows his horn. . . .

Perhaps he's got to heaven; there's none of us can say.
But if I'm right in my surmise, he's gone the other way.

The Chief Of the Pegasus

The Story of a
Gallant Triumph

By NORMAN REILLY RAINÉ

Illustrated by L. R. Gustavson

WILLIAM HUXTABLE, marine chief engineer, clung to the steps of the Public Library, where for upward of two hours he had held his vantage-point with uncharacteristic tenacity against the elbowing crowd. It was not easy, for years and dissipation had softened his once hardy frame. He craned his scrawny neck after the khaki rear-guard of the departing battalions as they disappeared up flag-hung Fifth Avenue. A squad of mounted police closed the parade and the mob broke, streaming up, down, across town. It receded in a tide from the Library steps and left William Huxtable like a solitary and rather age-worn rock, listening to the faint, dwindling strains of a regimental band.

That was the way, he presumed, that Ronny had gone; a straight, slim, hard young figure, chin stiff, eyes front, outwardly impassive, inwardly proud, marching along in column with a band at the head; just one fighting unit in the glorious battalions of youth. That was—lordy!—eleven years ago. He had been at sea at the time, chief in the tanker *Chemung*, on the voyage before she was mined. But he had looked up the files of the newspapers, and had scanned with a queer catch at the heart the rolls of the battalions that had gone over. There were columns of names; but one stood out, and the simple type blazed in letters of fire. *Private Ronald Huxtable*.

The engineer climbed stiffly down the steps and scuffed west along Forty-second Street to the park behind the Library. The

air was bracing, but bright November sunlight flooded the streets. Leaves, crisply gold, clung to the trees, and the grass was tipped by yellow spears. He found a bench looking out over Sixth Avenue and settled back with a grunt. On adjacent benches other men lounged, unkemptly dressed, their clothes wrinkled and dusty, their faces sullen or apathetic. Bums or unemployed idlers, like himself.

The afternoon wore on. Gray, friendly sparrows flickered in the dust. Elevated trains thundered past, noisily impersonal. Bootblacks, newsboys, went by, soliciting business. Girls passed, in closely held coats, their cheeks pink—real or artificial, what did it matter?—in the sharp autumn air. They were young and bright and quick. Capable. That was the word. They were the type that Ronny might have married.

WITH drink-palsied fingers the engineer took out a worn leather pocketbook, and abstracted from it a letter, the creased, grimy envelope reinforced about the edges with adhesive tape. Then, with steel-rimmed spectacles on the end of his nose, he opened the sheets. The contents were so familiar that he did not need to read. His bleary eyes moved, half-seeing, down the page.

*Over Here,
July 12th, 1918.*

"Dear Pop:

"I guess you'll be surprised to get this from me in France and all, but they moved us over soon after your boat sailed... It

was great. They was a big crowd, and boy how they yelled. Well, we didnt stop no tin fishes and we got to Brest okay. We didnt stay there long but got moved up I aint supposed to tell you where but it aint more than a million miles from the Big Noise. Ha ha. They was a scrap on and we was pushed into it. They sure raise cain when they get mad over here. I was scared all right. Some of the guys said they wasnt but their bellys was shaking same as mine for awhile. But I come through okay.

"Now dont go to worry Pop. Im all right. A lot of our guys got knocked off though. Gee its funny the way fellows turn out. Some that youd think was all right is yellow, and some that youd swear was palookas they sure got man meat hung onto their bones. That stands for you too Pop if youd lay off the booze.

"Well anyways what I was going to tell you. I got hold of a poem by a Canadian guy called Macrea or something and it was called *In Flanders Fields*, and the guys whats been killed is supposed to be talking. And theres one part where it says *To you from failing hands we give the torch. Be yours to hold it high.* Gee Pop Ill bet youll think Im crazy telling you all this instead of about the fighting and all. But anyways the other night we come out of the scrap and it was pretty bloody all right, and a lot of the guys thats names was called wasnt answering. Well whats left of the platoon gets talking it over and theres one roughneck called Barney Coughlin, and youd think he was a bum. And he was talking over this poem see, and Barney says read that part over again kid, about the torch and failing hands. And I did. And a guy what had lost his brother begins to cry. And Barney says pretty ugly I guess that means its up to us gang. And they didnt say much but they sure looked mean, and I feel sorry for the next jerrys we meet up with.

"Well I got a funny feeling about it all Pop. Maybe the guy what wrote it did mean jump in and knock hell out of the jerrys for the guys what got bumped. But I dont know. I think maybe he means something a whole lot bigger and deeper than that even. I guess Im a sap. But them words got kind of stuck in my mind. You know. *To you from failing hands. . . . Hells bells there goes fall in and I got to beat it. Were going up the line again tonight. Now dont you worry Pop old kid. Ill be all right.*"

WILLIAM HUXTABLE'S pale eyes lifted from the crude, untidily written sheet, and focused mistily upon a patch of sky, deeply blue, with small fleecy clouds edged dazzlingly in gold by the setting sun.

When the soaring roof-line opposite was black against the fading sunset the ragged loungers in the park forsook their benches and scattered to cadge money for a night's sleep or a meal. William Huxtable would have done likewise, only that bitter experience had taught him that he was not good at cadging. His rheumy eyes, veined, bulbous nose and weak mouth under the gray bedraggled mustache, were sign-posts, warning off charity.

For a while he did not move, except to retrieve a crumpled evening newspaper. He glanced at the headlines. There was an account of that day's Armistice Day parade, a gang murder, a civic patronage scandal, a threat of war between two adjoining Latin-American republics. William Huxtable shook his head. Foolish, foolish! Nations were like men; they never seemed to learn. The *Via Dolorosa* of the ages was still a springtime path.

He turned to the shipping page. Here, he could picture a goodly percentage of the ocean wanderers whose movements were reported. Some he had sailed in; others he would like to; but none offered any possibility to a stranded chief engineer with a thirst for booze and a smirched ticket. Grinning vacuously, with the outcast's forced philosophy, he stuffed the paper in his pocket—it would come in handy if he had to sleep out—and left the park.

ON the west side of Sixth Avenue, above Forty-fifth, was a lunchroom where a man could get a sizable bowl of Irish stew and a thick slice of bread for fifteen cents. William Huxtable did not have fifteen cents. He chose the stool nearest the door and smiled ingratiatingly at the beetle-browed waiter in his spotted apron.

"Could you spare a guy," he began.

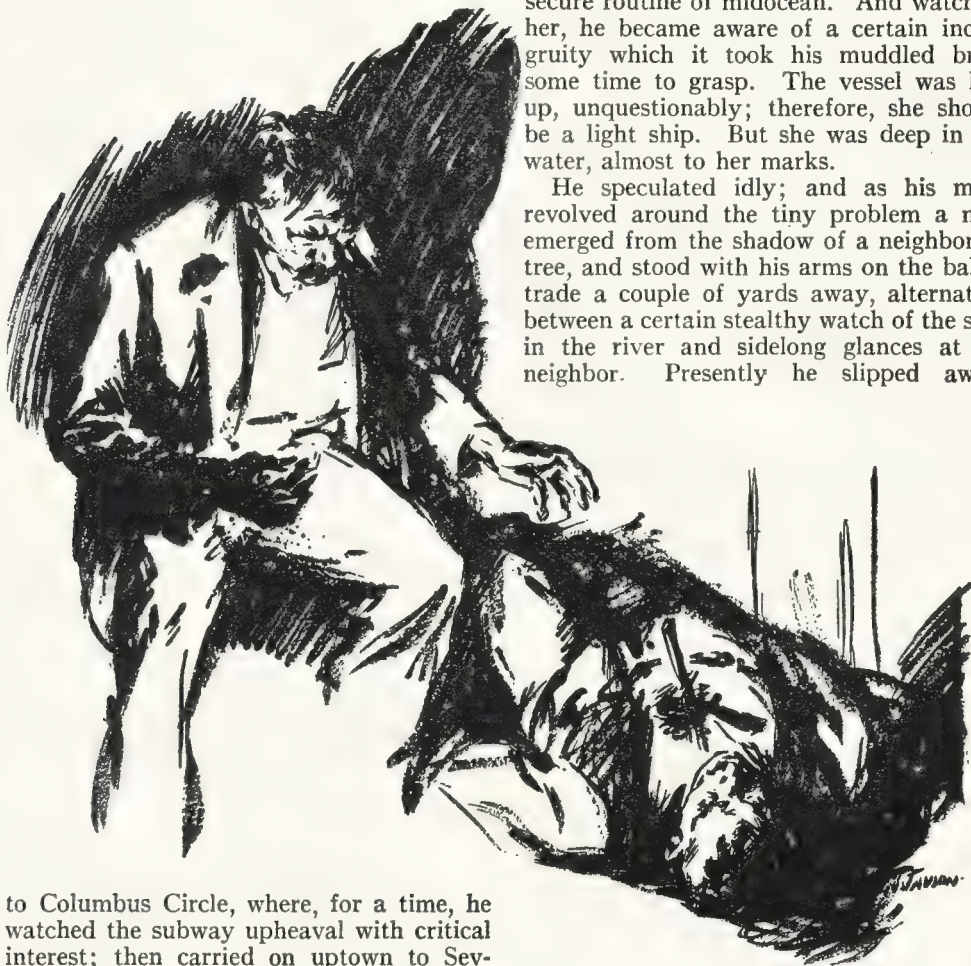
"Get outa here, you old bum!" the waiter roared, and picked up a ketchup bottle.

William Huxtable hurriedly shifted, shambling out the door with a comical attempt at jauntiness. He ambled up the avenue, tightening the belt about his flabby stomach. He cadged for a while, without result, then he was more fortunate. Some one stood him the price of a cup of coffee and a couple of sinkers.

WHEN he left the Coffee Pot the night was clear, and mildly cold, the stars remote and sparkling. He walked over Forty-ninth to Broadway, into the lights and noisy pre-theater traffic; up Broadway

here until fate took her in tow and pulled her around to the knacker's yard. A queer feeling of kinship took possession of him. He felt a sudden powerful longing to be afloat once again, in the old, comfortable, secure routine of midocean. And watching her, he became aware of a certain incongruity which it took his muddled brain some time to grasp. The vessel was laid up, unquestionably; therefore, she should be a light ship. But she was deep in the water, almost to her marks.

He speculated idly; and as his mind revolved around the tiny problem a man emerged from the shadow of a neighboring tree, and stood with his arms on the balustrade a couple of yards away, alternating between a certain stealthy watch of the ship in the river and sidelong glances at his neighbor. Presently he slipped away.



to Columbus Circle, where, for a time, he watched the subway upheaval with critical interest; then carried on uptown to Seventy-second Street. Here he cut over toward the river; down over the tracks farther up he might find a shack where he could crawl for the night.

A few blocks along he stood for a while near the balustrade, watching the lights of moving tugs and ferries in the Hudson. Then a nearer object caught his eye; an old tramp steamer, which lay alongside a dimly lighted wharf. She was not large, two thousand tons, maybe, and she was painted a dull black, hull and funnel, with houses a dingy white. Even in the poor light he could see that she was ill-conditioned and neglected; a deep-water hulk like himself, he thought without bitterness, whose days of usefulness were ended, lying

*He scrambled to his feet, struck a match
—and looked down into the staring eyes
of a corpse.*

After a few minutes he reappeared with a companion.

When William Huxtable became aware of their regard, they were close upon him. He drew back in sudden fright, his elbow raised to protect his head.

"Got a match, Mister?" one of them said.

With fingers shaking, the engineer handed him a grubby cardboard affair, given away free at tobacconists'. The man struck a light; but his eyes, piercing through the spurt of orange flame, were

fixed upon William Huxtable's face. The match went out.

"Much obliged," he said, and shaking his head briefly to his mate said a few low words. Without looking again at Huxtable they crossed the Drive and disappeared.

"Foreigners," Huxtable thought to himself; "wonder what they were up to?"—and directed his attention to the river again. As he did so he thought he detected some slight movement in the shadows of the warehouse near the steamer.

"I'm jumpy tonight," he said aloud. "Mebbe I'll go down and have a look at her. Give me something to think about."

He left the Drive and descended to where the abandoned tramp lay, dark and silent in her black sea pool. There was no one about. He walked out on the dock, his worn heels making no sound. By the wharf light he could just make out her name, in discolored, half-obliterated letters. *Pegasus*—Cardiff. She was old and battered, her paintwork flaking off in leprous patches. Her gear was worn and chafed and rusted.

There was a gangplank to the deck, but no ship-keeper that he could see. Still, no harm, perhaps, in a look around. The chief climbed the plank, stepped on the rail, and jumped with practiced feet to the bitts and the deck. Immediately the sound of his feet on the iron plates told him her hold was full. He moved forward into black shadow, and climbed the rusty ladder to the waist. The engine-room housing was in keeping with the rest, unpainted and unkempt. Huxtable tried the doors, but they were locked. The paint-work on the house beside the galley pump still bore the marks of stokers' grimy hands. Yet the intuition of the old seafaring man told him with increasing force that the vessel was ready for sea.

He walked along, past the saddle bunker hatch on the starboard side, and crossed to the port alleyway. It was pitch black in the shadow of the upper works, but he knew exactly where to step high, over the cased-in deck steam lines. The port alleyway was a tunnel of blackness, still as the tomb. He ventured a few feet along, then stumbled, and fell sprawling. Half stunned he scrambled to his feet; fumbled for a match, struck it as soon as his trembling hands would allow, and looked down into the staring eyes of a corpse; a corpse, with hanging jaw awry, constricted limbs, and the bone handle of a knife sticking out its chest. The match dropped.

Before his petrified limbs could obey the instinct to run a door suddenly was flung open down the alleyway, and a shaft of yellow light cut across the blackness. A man's deep voice roared:

"Who's that?"

THERE was menace in the tone, and a vague undercurrent of terror. The engineer kept silent, unable to move.

The other stepped into the alleyway, a formidable bulk of a man, outlined against the light. Softly he closed the door behind him and padded forward in the dark. The chief's skin prickled. Why was the fellow sneaking up on him like that? The thought of his peril drove the dead man from his mind. He had to escape; his soft, whisky-rotted body was in no condition to fight. There was a quick shuffle of feet, and the other man tripped over the body and came down with a crash. He yelled: "What the hell—"

William Huxtable turned and ran—fair into a big, sinewy body with outstretched hands. He heard his new assailant rasp, "Eet is all right, Murphy! I haff 'im!" and a muscular arm whipped about his throat, cutting off his wind and bearing him to the deck. There was a confused, panicky babble of voices, and specks of scarlet shot against the violet background of his consciousness as slowly but certainly he was strangled, his most desperate effort puny against that terrible strength. Vaguely a voice raised in expostulation penetrated his throbbing eardrums.

Gradually the hooked arm about his throat relaxed. He was gripped on each side, hauled to his feet, and shoved along the alleyway. A door opened and he was flung headlong over the coaming into the saloon.

There were two men in the room. One, sitting in the captain's seat at the starboard end of the table, was small and wiry, with a deeply tanned face and shrewd little close-set eyes. He sprang to his feet.

"What the hell was the matter out there? Where's Bellanger? And who is this man, Murphy?"

His voice was a bronchial wheeze.

Murphy, a paunchy beast, with lowering bulldog features, who looked like a third-rate pugilist gone to seed, answered.

"Bellanger's dead. This guy croaked him—"

"I did not!" William Huxtable broke in wildly, his voice high with fright. "No,



Roderiguez leaned forward and slapped him cruelly on the mouth, bringing a trickle of blood. "Por Dios! Speak up, pig!"

sir! It wasn't me! I come aboard for a look around, that's all! I didn't know anybody was on board and I was kinda curious. An' then in the alleyway I fell across that— Oh, my God, let me outa here!"

"You shut your trap! —Murphy, carry Bellanger in here, then get out on deck and watch. This is just a beginning. What's the matter wi' you, man? Scared? Well then, get out and look smart!"

MURPHY, obviously frightened, left the cabin. The little man turned to William Huxtable's other captor. He was tall and swarthy and narrow-waisted, with broad, square shoulders and springy legs. His black eyes were snapping. Queerly enough, penetrating his fright, the conviction came to William Huxtable that he had seen the man before; that that keen, hawk-like face somewhere had crossed his orbit. But this was no time to ponder it. The little man was speaking.

"What about this fellow, Mr. Roderiguez? Is he one of 'em? He doesn't look like a killer, I must say."

Roderiguez turned to the engineer, dark eyes flaming, his teeth a vicious white line.

"W'ere you come-from? Who put you up to thees, hey?"

Buffeted and dazed by the events of the night, the chief's mind was incapable of

dealing with more than one idea at a time. At the moment it was striving to trace through a flux of terror a thread that would lead to this man's identity. In it, he felt, lay the key to the whole ghastly business. Roderiguez leaned forward and slapped him cruelly across the mouth, bringing a trickle of blood.

"*Por Dios! Speak up, pig!*"

William Huxtable cringed and fell back, wiping his bruised lips with the back of a trembling hand.

"I'm telling you truth, sir," he whined. "Nobody sent me."

The man on the settee interpolated, contemptuously.

"You're off the track, Mr. Roderiguez. He's just a drunken bum. Look at him!"

The shaking limbs, frightened, bleary eyes, and puffed flesh told their tale. The little man's gimlet eyes took in every unprepossessing detail.

"Chapman's right. What's your name, you?"

"Name's William Huxtable, sir. I'm a marine engineer."

The others exchanged quick glances.

"You're a *what*?"

"A marine chief engineer. That aint so queer, is it, sir?"

"What's your ship?"

"I'm out of a berth."

"Humph! Booze, and a dirty ticket. That's your measure, I guess."

"I was chief in the *City of Lucknow* once, sir. But as you say, my ticket aint what it might be, now; and I'm not young."

THE little man regarded him with renewed interest. He turned to Chapman.

"He's telling the truth. But what'll we do with him?"

"Tie him up, and lay him away ashore. The crew'll be here any minute now, and the tug's on the way."

The other shook his head.

"I'm going to keep him. He's a gift. The *City of Lucknow* was a crack Orient liner in her day. Robertson backed out, and I have no chief. This fellow's pretty mangy, now; still—"

He was interrupted by the reappearance of Murphy.

"The crew's on the dock, sir, wi' the mate."

"Out on deck, then, and watch the bank. And fire at any funny movement! You, Huxtable, come wi' me. Maybe you killed Bellanger, maybe not. We'll let it ride for the time. But stick close with me; and if you start anything you'll get a slug through you. Mind that!"

On the dock at the foot of the gangway was a group of twenty men, standing, or sitting on dunnage bags and suitcases. Captain Sharpo leaned over the side.

"Mr. Halliday!"

A figure detached himself.

"Sir?"

"Detail two men to single up, and get the rest aboard as smart as you like. The tug's coming into the slip, now."

The crew flocked to the gangway, an unsavory lot of rakehells in the dim light.

As they were filing up, a staccato roar broke in tiny buds of flame from Riverside Drive, and long white splinters leaped from the planks of the dock. A man in the struggling mob on the gangplank fell off, and rolled into the river, between the wharf and the ship's side. Another man pitched on his face to the deck plates, and attempted to crawl to the cover of a hatch. From the partial shelter of the after house Murphy whimpered as he pumped bullets from his automatic pistol at the attackers. He was seconded by the tall foreigner, who fired a long-barreled forty-five with deliberate aim.

Huxtable cowered terrified in the darkness of the alleyway, watching the lurid

battle with fascinated eyes. The automatic rifle on the bank traversed, splashing decks and upper works with steel-jacketed lead. Murphy clapped both hands to his throat and sagged to his knees. Another bullet stretched him flat. William Huxtable, obeying some deep inner instinct, braved the fire to run out and try with his inadequate strength to drag the heavy body to the shelter of the saddle bunker hatch. A bullet rapped off the corner of the deck house and ricocheted with a vicious whine. It seared the chief's scalp, stunning him; but even as he fell he clutched Murphy, and again attempted to drag him to cover. Captain Sharpo, who seemed to be everywhere, came to his aid.

Whistles blew shrilly, up on the Drive. Abruptly the firing stopped. The only sound on the darkened deck of the *Pegasus* was the scurry of boots, and hard, dry sobbing somewhere in the shadows of the after well deck. Roderiguez heaved Murphy to his shoulders, and the chief followed him to the captain's cabin on the lower bridge. There was an oil lamp, and they did what they could for the man. It was not much.

Presently Roderiguez disappeared, and the Chief was left alone. He bathed and bound his dripping scalp, his mind a dizzy chaos through which he strove to force a plan for sneaking ashore. He swayed to the door, and looked out. The tug had a line aboard, and the *Pegasus* slowly was being pulled into the stream. Between dock and ship was thirty feet of swirling black water.

Chapman appeared, white to the lips. "Rotten business," he said. His eyes darted to the blood-flecked figure in the bunk. Huxtable shook his head.

"He's dead."

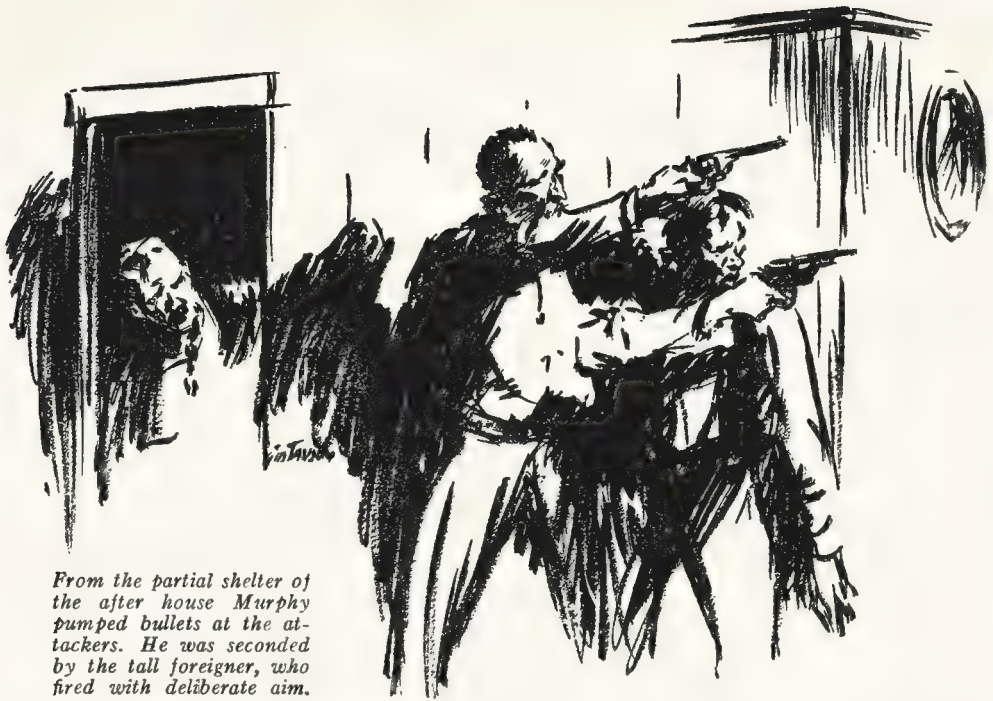
"Damnation!" the other said harshly. "And you been hit, too? The Old Man wants you down below."

IN the saloon was Captain Sharpo, with Halliday the mate, and two other men, one tall and saturnine with morose eyes, the other stout and fair.

"This is Mr. Huxtable, the chief engineer," Captain Sharpo said.

The chief tried to find his tongue, but speech and ideas blurred. He was cut short.

"That's Mr. Beers, your second,"—introducing the dark man,—"and the other's Mr. Hansen, the third engineer. You'll stand a watch, Chief. The black gang's



From the partial shelter of the after house Murphy pumped bullets at the attackers. He was seconded by the tall foreigner, who fired with deliberate aim.

aft. Split 'em into watches, Mr. Beers, and put 'em to work. I want steam up as soon as we can have it. The tug'll have us until then. That's all. The Chief'll join you presently."

Roderiguez entered as they trooped out. He eyed William Huxtable.

"W'at about thees man?"

"I told you he's going with us as chief."

By terrific effort Huxtable cleared his spinning head. He mumbled protest.

"You got no leave to take me like this, sir. I don't want to be mixed up in all this business of murder and—"

"That'll do. You're here, and you'll stay. We are breaking no law, but there are them that wished to prevent us sailing, and they'll stop at nothing, as you've seen. We outfitted and loaded, and brought the crew off in secret, to save trouble, not to dodge the authorities. I'll sign you on, and all you've got to do is obey orders. I'm in command, but Mr. Roderiguez there has chartered the vessel. It's his racket."

Why would they not stand still, instead of jiggling to and fro in a mist. He stammered:

"It don't look right to me. Barrin' a bit o' drinking now and again, I been a respectable—"

"You're coming, so you might as well do yourself a good turn. With another ship's name on your papers you'll stand a chance of getting a fresh berth when you get back."

Captain Sharpo's keen eyes penetrated the sodden flesh. "Ye don't look it, but you've got guts. The way you went after Murphy! Well—"

Roderiguez broke in savagely.

"W'at for you bother with thees cow? We should be on deck in case they pursue. Remember, this cargo is absolutely essential. My whole career depends on it. And if we fail to arrive there can be no—"

INTO William Huxtable's muddled intelligence came a tiny spark. There was a link missing in a chain of which he held two ends. If he could fit that link every sinister and mysterious circumstance of the night would fall into its ordered place. And the link had something to do with the strong, brutally passionate face of Roderiguez, its angles bold and predatory in the yellow lamplight. Something to do, too, with. . . . His thoughts were like waving antennæ . . . with Ronny!

He heard a voice speaking, outside himself. The voice of Chief Engineer William Huxtable of the *City of Lucknow*. It said, to Captain Sharpo: "I will sign on, now."

"That's that, then! Chapman, get out the glasses. We'll have a shot apiece before we turn to."

Again the strange voice outside himself spoke; and for the first time in thirty reeking years William Huxtable refused a drink.

AT daybreak the old *Pegasus* was lifting gently to a slight ground-swell, and bound south under her own steam. Far to starboard the lights of the Jersey coast glimmered like lost stars. William Huxtable climbed painfully topside for a breath of air. He was dressed in a disreputable boiler suit which he had picked up below. He had worked hard; had taken hold and slogged his black gang through it with a fierce driving energy and competence that startled them. The old stew-bum knew his job, they conceded.

But with steam up, and watches set, dynamo going and lights through the ship, the mental and physical strain of the night told, and for the better part of an hour William Huxtable had been in hell. So long as there was a job to do, instinct did it. With relaxation of effort his brain clouded, unable to adjust itself or to function, without that fiery dilution which alone had the power to produce thought, and propel life through his sluggish veins. He stood on deck near the top of the fidley, chewing his nails to overcome the wild trembling of his hands, his faded eyes seemingly bursting from his skull. The raw air of morning cut unheeded through his thin clothing and dried the body's unaccustomed sweat.

He blundered forward. There was a bottle in the saloon, and it was unlikely that anyone would be astir there. Just one good hooker; only one, to put him on his feet again! He reached the alleyway, and stepped over the coaming, and a grim echo of the night's tragedy hit him. He halted, rubbing his pinched face savagely with hard, dry hands. What else might he find in the saloon besides the bottle? Where had they laid the bodies of the men who had been killed, Bellanger, Murphy, and the man on the deck?

Sick to the heels, he swayed. The world rocked. Voices shouted in his ears; old familiar voices, guiding, directing him. Ronny. . . . A job to do . . . he was going off his head. "Ronny, son, what is it? Eh? Louder, son! What did—" He listened.

SUDDENLY he turned about. The *Pegasus* was a gigantic pendulum in a red void. He ran aft along the deck, shouting aloud. The startled mate spun around on the bridge, steaming coffee-mug poised in his hand, and stared. He wondered where the chief had got it; but the chief was clat-

tering down the iron steps to the engine-room. A blast of hot air rushed up to meet him. The clank and pound of the crankshafts, the suck and sigh of the pumps, the whirr of the fan, the smooth hum of the dynamo, all the old familiar atmosphere, steadied him. He could not think, but he could act. And now he knew what he had to do.

Beers, who was on watch, was busy in the workshop. He looked up curiously as the chief entered. Huxtable spoke, and the deucer's heavy brows came together. "What?" he snapped.

"You heard what I said. Get away topside and turn in. I'll take this watch!"

His tone compelled obedience. The man pulled on his jacket and left, his eyes, black with suspicion, looking down through the grating as he climbed.

When the door clanged above, the chief went to his coat, swinging from a hook, and pulled out the crumpled newspaper he had stuffed in the pocket the evening before. He smoothed it, under an electric bulb.

His chain was complete; for there looked up at him the printed likeness of Roderiguez, diplomatic envoy to Washington of one of those two rival Latin-American states which thirsted to spill the blood of their neighbor. A war maker, who had made of the *Pegasus* a sinister thing, cramming her old hatches with the grim machinery of slaughter. What was it he had said? "*This cargo is essential. Without it there can be no war.*"

No war, to be fought with the suffering of other men, and the blood of their sons! He and Ronny, they knew what war was; they had drunk its wine to the bitter lees. Now, he was an old bum, a drunken sot; always had been that, but the boy had loved him just the same. Well, now he would show Mr. Roderiguez! He fumbled for a moment in the inner pocket of his coat, running gnarled fingers over the smooth leather of the pocketbook that held his precious letter. "I'm hurryin', son," he said aloud, his voice curiously gentle. "I know now, what you mean."

AT ten o'clock in the forenoon the old *Pegasus* lifted sluggishly to a deep blue roller, then dipped, clipping the top from a low crest. A tiny jet of water cascaded on the rusty fo'castle-head. She dipped again, lurching a bit, and sluggishly recovered. Captain Sharpo, who was going over some papers in his cabin felt the lurch.

He heard something, too; confused and excited shouting, coming from the waist. He jumped out on deck. Three firemen were running clumsily for'ard from the fidley. They were cut and battered; their boots were wet.

"What's the matter, men?" the master rasped.

"Bloody coffin's sinkin', sir," yelled one of them. "That's wot! Water's over the stoke'old plates; and the Chief's gone mad

manhole from the poop to the after tunnel, and get him that way."

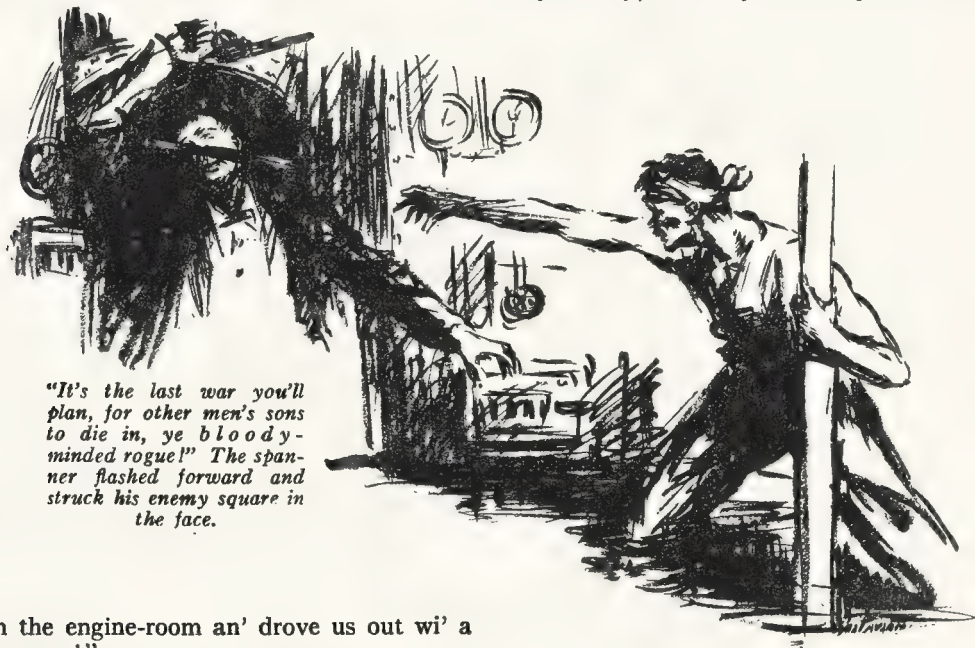
"Better take some one with you," Sharpo suggested.

The deucer spat. "I can handle him," he said succinctly. . . .

He was back presently, running, wet trousers flopping ludicrously about his legs.

"Tunnel's half full o' water, and he's dropped the watertight door!"

Stillness descended upon the ship. The engines had stopped. The *Pegasus* rolled majestically, and they distinctly heard the



"It's the last war you'll plan, for other men's sons to die in, ye bloody-minded rogue!" The spanner flashed forward and struck his enemy square in the face.

in the engine-room an' drove us out wi' a spanner!"

Captain Sharpo hailed the bridge. "Pull the whistle-cord and muster all hands at the boats," he directed the white-faced third mate. Scalding hot drops showered the deck as the siren blared. Men came running, from fo'castle and forepeak. Roderiguez emerged from his room, his dark face contorted. He was armed. He demanded of the master:

"What the hell is the matter now?"

"Put that gun away!" Captain Sharpo told him curtly. He turned to the mate. "Get the boats swung out, Mister. If they're manned before I give the word, you'll swim!"

With the two engineers and Roderiguez, he went to the door in the after engine-room housing. It was locked.

"Bolted himself in," said Beers dolefully.

"I thought he was actin' queer this mornin' at daybreak. Here—I'll nip down the

gurgle of water in her depths. Roderiguez broke into frenzied blasphemy.

"Well, do something!" he stormed. "W'at for you stand around like seek hens?"

The master shut him up.

"How did he do it, Beers?" he asked the second. "He couldn't have opened the cocks, or we'd have foundered long ago."

"Took out the bilge ejection valve, most likely, and opened up the main inlet valves. With the pumps regulated as he wanted them, instead o' discharging they've been pumping in hundreds o' tons o' sea water, for God only knows how many hours. No chance to stop it now. We'll have to abandon."

"You, Beers, and Hansen, and Roderiguez—down the fidley ladder to the stokehold. He can't block that, and we *may*

have a chance to save her. Anyway, it's worth risking."

Roderiguez swore between set teeth. They bolted for the fidley, Captain Sharpo remaining on deck to superintend the manning of the boats. He needed feet and fists against the panicky crew, and used them.

CHIEF ENGINEER WILLIAM HUXTABLE stood in the flooded engine-room, in water up to his knees. He heard the hammer of the deucer's fist, after his wild struggle with the firemen, on the watertight door that blocked the propeller-shaft tunnel. No danger from that end. From for'ard, through the low arch between the boilers was the way they'd come next, if they did return. His head was light, but his faculties were clear. This was his hour. Fatigue slipped from him. Why, he was young, and strong, and clean-bodied! And how admirably he had succeeded! He told Ronny so, and was proud of his approval. A smart piece of work, and no lives lost. He had given them plenty of time to get the boats away. Just a few minutes more, now, before the *Pegasus* plunged.

His ears caught the metallic ring of heavy boots on the rungs of the stokehold ladder. He caught up his spanner, then splashed over toward the entrance and waited. The deucer's voice came through.

"Chief! Are ye there?"

"Aye. What do ye want?"

"What have ye been up to, man? The vessel's sinkin'!"

"Well? What then? The sea bottom's good enough for a ship that carries such a cargo in her womb!"

"Talk sense, man! We're coming—"

"Stand back!"

"We're coming in. I give ye warning!"

"At your own risk. There's two of us here! Eh, boy? And I've opened the cocks. Ye'd best be away!"

FURTHER parleying was ended by Roderiguez' bull rush. He swept his companions through the arch and full into battle. William Huxtable jumped to meet them. The water sloshed and surged about their thighs as they fought, lashing out, dodging, grappling; but try as they might they could not get a fair grip of the chief's elusive frame. He lashed in, struck right and left, darted back, his spanner whirling like the flashing hammer of Mars. Hansen reeled out of the fight with three broken ribs and a cracked collarbone. The deucer

was tougher metal. He jumped into a terrific swipe that smashed teeth and jawbone, and knocked him back into the stokehold, dazed and spouting blood.

And now that the bodies of his allies no longer intervened, Roderiguez stepped clear and raised his hand. The light gleamed on a long blue barrel.

The old chief recognized him. He shouted, his pale eyes gleaming like blue ice.

"Oh, it's you, is it? It's *him*, Ronny! The one I told ye of! But he's too late, boy! Too late!"

He ducked and lunged forward as the roar of the shot echoed between the wet steel walls. He shouted again, a triumphant cry.

"It's the last war you'll plan, for other men's sons to die in, ye bloody-minded rogue!"

Roderiguez fired again with expert aim, and the heavy bullet caught William Huxtable through the chest. He stumbled backward and went down, and the black water closed over him; but almost immediately he was up again, bracing himself against a stanchion. By magnificent effort he summoned the last flurry of fighting strength. The spanner flashed forward and smashed his enemy square in the face. As the man dropped beneath the surface the dynamo failed. The lights went out.

An urgent voice bellowed down:

"Get up here, you fellows! Never mind him now! We've got to get clear!"

Hansen, wrung with fright, groped his way to the ladder—returned for Beers, and together they climbed desperately toward daylight and safety.

THE *Pegasus* rolled wearily, and the wash of the sea-water in her overladen bowels ran far up the smooth plates. In the engine-room William Huxtable still was clinging, in waist-deep water, to his stanchion. A hundred sighs and gurgles reached his ears in the last moments of the dying ship, but his voice rose in the blackness, clear above them all.

"*'To you, from failing hands, we give the torch. . . .'* Ah, you were right, Ronny—that's a thought for the wicked world to chew on! . . . *'Be yours to hold it high!'*"

His knees sagged. He coughed deeply, clutching at his chest, then with a final sublime instinct pulled himself upright.

"*'From failing hands. . . .'* All right, son. I'm coming."



*A joyous adventure of
the Easy Street Experts*

By BERTRAM ATKEY

The Indestructible Lady

Illustrated by Frank Hoban

"NEVER, as long as you live to encumber this green earth, can you hope to be a golfer!" said the Honorable John Brass heavily to his partner, Colonel Clumber. "No—never! The way you hit at that ball was a disgrace to the League of Nations! They ought to have Total Prohibition, for a golfer like you! Ha-ha! Here, let me show you how you heaved your great carcass at that ball! No wonder you hit it off the map—in the totally wrong direction! Buffaloes could do no more—camels could do no less; but a human being should act a trifle superior to the brute creation."

Mr. Brass leaned smilingly against his brassie and let his lower jaw swing thus with its accustomed facility.

"You're four down now, Squire," he resumed, "and four down you will always be unless you pull yourself together and clear your ideas up a little. This is a game of knack and skill, not a trial of brute force. You're not hammering spikes in the road—you're playing a game—"

Colonel Clumber completed the process of inhaling an amount of air equivalent to that which he had lost in the explosion to which he had given terrific utterance on making the rotten shot which Mr. Brass was so freely criticizing.

"Listen," he then said. "I want no more of your valuable advice—no more of it! You play your game, and I'll play my game. When I feel I've got something to learn from you about golf I'll let you know. I'll stop the game and request you to deliver a small lecture on golf, you poor old twenty-four handicap, grave-digging, mole-frightening, grass-cutting, bunker-wrecking specialist! Four up! You are four up, are you? I don't know of a single thing that strikes me as being of less consequence than you being four up on me—"

"There's no need," interrupted Mr. Brass stiffly, "to be rude over a game of golf that you're losing! If you are the sort of player that doesn't care to take advantage of the friendly interest of a player like myself in your game—why, you aren't."

That's all. But you're wrong, Squire. Some time you'll see it for yourself. There's no need to be rude and hot and angry with a good friend who asks nothing better than to be allowed to put you right about the science of the thing. I'm not a professional—I don't charge you anything for my advice—it's free—"

"I pay you what it's worth—*nothing!*" shouted the Colonel, apparently maddened at his partner's cool assumption of such colossal superiority.

"Well, well, don't holler about it—you are getting folks looking at you. Here's one old lady already tearing over to see what's wrong!"

The Colonel glanced over to see an old lady hurrying toward them, evincing every conceivable symptom of joining in the conversation. He suggested his present notion of an ideal health resort for all interfering old ladies, sullenly dropped a ball and resumed the battle with singular ferocity.

Then the partners strode with true golfing gloom down the course.

WHEN he reached his ball, Mr. Brass paused before addressing it to glance back at the old lady.

She had not followed them far, and now was just disappearing along the trees bordering the links with her arm in that of a tall girl in a brown-and-orange jumper.

His caddie followed his look.

"That's only the old lady who lives in the red house you can just see at the twelfth, sir," he volunteered. "She's childish, sir."

"Ah, is she so, my lad? Humph! There are times when I wish I was childish myself. Just give me that mashie," he said, one keen eye on Colonel Clumber not far distant.

He lost that hole in spite of his partner's lack of science, knack and skill—as he did the next—and the next.

Consequently, he was in but a dourish and fumesome mood when a little later, at the twelfth hole, he was approached by the girl who had led the old lady away.

"I am so sorry that my mother interrupted your game," she said, smiling upon the Honorable John. "Did she bother you—talking? She is very fond of talking to people—strangers—she meets on the golf-links."

The Honorable John's quick, rather hard eyes played over her—without much interest at first, for he was absorbed in his

game. But, quickly enough, a new interest appeared in his expression, for he realized at once that she was an extremely handsome woman in a tall, athletic sort of way. She was obviously no longer a chicken (as Mr. Brass mentally expressed it) and she looked to be a woman of no little experience, worldly wisdom, and understanding. "Too much, in fact!" thought the Honorable John as he beamed on her, and began to explain that the old lady had not bothered them at all. A far less astute adventurer than Mr. Brass would have noticed the look of undisguised relief which gleamed for a moment in the bold dark eyes of the woman.

Then she smiled, said that she was glad, wished them a pleasant game and turned away, taking out a cigarette-case as she strolled toward the little red house just visible among the trees.

The Colonel looked after her approvingly.

"A fine woman, that," he asserted. "Big, strong, healthy specimen of womanhood—just about my style."

But Mr. Brass, for once, did not set out to prove that she was really much more his "style" than the Colonel's. On the contrary, his gaze was thoughtful as he stood watching her go.

"Maybe, maybe she's your style, Squire," he said. "But something tells me that if you picked her out for a wife, she'd live up your ideas before you'd been married long! She's hard, that young lady is—iron could be no harder, if I am any judge. There's something about her I don't much fancy. I admit it was very polite of her to come over ready to apologize for her ma, and so on, but—was it necessary?"

But the Colonel only laughed.

"I guess when a girl like her sees a man like me on these quiet country links playing a fine bold overhauling game of golf like I am, now I've run into my true form—you're only one up now—she's got a right to come over and try to scrape an acquaintance with me on any excuse!"

He chuckled, charmed with the idea and even more with the look on his partner's face.

"I've got an idea I shall see more of that young lady before this little holiday is over," he declared, vaingloriously. "Stand back—it's my honor."

Mr. Brass stood back in an unusually submissive, almost absent-minded way. They drove in silence, and trudged on

down the course—the Honorable John to the rough on the right, Colonel Clumber to the rough on the left.

"Did you say that old lady was childish, boy?" Mr. Brass demanded of his caddie.

"Yessir. So folks say," replied the youth.

"Hum! What's their name?"

"Duxtable, sir. The old lady is the young lady's ma-in-law, sir."

"Oh, that's it, is it, my lad? They all live together in that red house, do they? What sort of a man is Mr. Duxtable? Good golfer, I suppose?"

The small caddie shook his head.

"I don't know, sir. He aint living at home. He lives in some foreign part, so they says about here. The only gentleman young Mrs. Duxtable plays golf with is Mr. Huntingdale, a gentleman who paints pictures about here, sir."

"Oh, is that it? Well, well—just give me that niblick, my boy, and break off that bit of bush growing over my ball."

MR. BRASS was thoughtful throughout the remainder of the game—so thoughtful that it must have interfered with his "knack and skill," for the Colonel beat him by four up.

But Mr. Brass was oddly and most unusually unperturbed about this. He only smiled a little wryly as, walking back to the hotel, the Colonel began to give him some unasked-for advice about his mashie shots.

"You used your mashie as if you thought you were holding a Dutch hoe, man," said the Colonel in his uncharming way.

"Yes, I know," agreed Mr. Brass. "I was thinking. I've got Mrs. Duxtable on my mind."

"Mrs. Duxtable! And who the dickens might Mrs. Duxtable be?"

"That young married woman you think is so much your particular style," explained Mr. Brass. "I am none too well satisfied about her and her mother!"

"That will worry them an awful lot," said the Colonel satirically. "What have they done except be polite to you? As a matter of fact, the girl was out-of-the-way nice."

"Yes, I know," admitted Mr. Brass. "That's what I'm wondering about! I'm not much of a man for the girls—but at the same time I never knew a girl to be out-of-the-way nice except for some out-of-the-way reason."

He glanced at his watch as they stepped onto the veranda of the comfortable little hotel near the links—a quiet, tranquil little course in the heart of the New Forest, known only to the comparatively few golfers who are willing to take a good deal of trouble to find a place where good golf can be obtained with good cookery.

"Lunch in fifteen minutes," said Mr. Brass. "Meantime, we'd better have something to tide us over till then. Personally, I'm all parched up."

When, a minute or so later, the unparching process was in full swing, the observant old rascal returned to the question of young Mrs. Duxtable.

"It's a very small, delicate point, Squire, and few men would notice it—if I hadn't the eye of a hawk and a very quick brain behind it I don't mind admitting it would have escaped even my notice—but there was no real reason for that young woman to come over to us in that way. Her ma hadn't interfered—she never came within range. We were well away and well on with our game when the daughter came up to the old lady. Well, now, she said with her mouth that she hoped her ma hadn't bothered us—but with her eyes she said something else. She was anxious—worried—and when we said the old lady hadn't butted in at all, she was relieved. Why? She was afraid her mother had said something—told us something—she shouldn't have done. And that was why she came over—to find out if that was so!"

Mr. Brass beamed on his partner.

"See, Colonel?"

But the Colonel snorted derisively.

"No, I don't," he said. "I don't see that at all. I think you're fancying things. That young woman was a very considerate, ladylike, attractive party. I liked her and I'm going to ask her to dine here with me one of these evenings. I think you've got hold of a mare's tail—a mare's nest—and if you don't look out, you'll find it'll turn on you and fasten its teeth in the slack of your plus-fours in no half-hearted fashion!"

But Mr. Brass only smiled blandly.

"I knew a bit of fine reasoning like that would get past *you*, Squire," he said composedly, finishing his *aperitif*. And he led the way to lunch.

UNLIKE the Colonel, Mr. Brass cut his after-lunch *siesta* short.

It was midway between two and three

o'clock when he woke with a start that made the big basket-chair on the veranda groan. He waited a few seconds, then lit a cigar, gazed at his sleeping partner, and strolled away, round to the garage at the back of the hotel.

He found Sing, his Chinese valet, cook, chauffeur and general all-round working-machine, concentrating with three other chauffeurs on what appeared to be a form of bitter self-torture performed with ordinary playing-cards, and called fan-tan.

The old adventurer grinned genially from behind his cigar at the quartet.

"So, while your bosses are breaking their hearts out on the links you lads sit here wringing out your souls this way, hey? Well, well, *vive le sport*, as they say in France," he said. "But I'll have to rob the company of one of its decorations for an hour or two. Just play out this hand, however. I'll watch."

He meandered round the players, glancing at each hand, and halted finally behind an elderly grizzled chauffeur.

"I have got a half-crown which says my friend here will wipe up the floor with all present, bar myself, this deal."

Sing looked up showing his teeth in a parsimonious Chinese smile.

"You bettee half-clown, Master, please? Velly well—I bettee half-clown, please, me winning, Master!"

"You're on, Sing—but you'll win yourself about as much as an old maid's mistle-toe wins her!"

Grimly the hand was played.

Mr. Brass was really an observant man, but he failed rather signally to observe just exactly how his yellow retainer won that hand. Yet win he did, apparently without effort.

MR. BRASS stared fixedly at him, then at the cards, then back at Sing.

"You've won!" he said, with a touch of incredulity in his fruity voice.

"Yes, Master, please," agreed Sing.

"But, damme, man, that was impossible!" roared the Honorable John.

"That's what I'm always a-telling him, sir," said the grizzled chauffeur, sourly. "I ought to have won that lot, sir, as you seen for yourself. He's always scraping out like that, sir. I'm glad he's got to go on duty, sir—he's injurious!"

"He is that," agreed Mr. Brass heartily; and he paid Sing his half-crown and led him kindly but firmly away.

"You want to remember that those chaps have probably got wives and families to support, my lad! I didn't like the way you cleared up that hand. I'll have to take you on that fan-tan game myself one of these days," he threatened.

Half an hour later, the Chink was lost in a very different game from garage fan-tan. To be exact, he was rather deftly prying open a small window at the back of the lonely little cottage—not far from the red house—rented by Mr. Huntingdale the artist, who, according to the Honorable John's caddie, was such good friends with young Mrs. Duxtable.

Acting on his employer's instructions, Sing had waited under cover of the trees until he had seen Mr. Huntingdale come out from his cottage with a golf-bag slung over his shoulder, carefully lock the cottage door, and stroll off toward the red house.

A few minutes later Mr. Brass carefully concealing his portly figure behind a huge beech not far from the front door of the red house, saw young Mrs. Duxtable emerge therefrom and seat herself on a deck chair. He noticed that she locked the door behind her.

AS she sat smoking, evidently waiting for some one, another person came round, evidently from the back of the house. If the Honorable John Brass had been a party easily thrilled it is possible that he would have encountered quite a thrilling little jar at sight of this newcomer—for he was unprepossessing to a degree. Short and shambling, squat and square, with legs so bowed that he could have ridden beer-barrels in absolute comfort, and with arms so extravagantly long that he could almost have scratched his ankles without stooping, the creature was a startling contrast to the attractive lady. He was lean and dark and leathery about the features and face; his eyes were small and set extraordinarily deep under craggy brows, and his jaw protruded about twice as far as any normal jaw. And it needed shaving—just as the man's hair needed cutting.

This he-being shambled up to Mrs. Duxtable's chair and spoke so softly that Mr. Brass could not hear his voice. But he heard quite clearly the sharp, clear reply of the woman.

"No, certainly not. Wait till we come back from golf. Then you can go for an hour or two. Meanwhile, get the car ready; Mr. Huntingdale and I will be leav-

*"Listen," said the Colonel,
"when I've got something to
learn from you about golf, I'll
let you know—you poor mole-
frightening bunker-wrecking
specialist!"*



ing for London after tea. And this time don't forget to fill up with petrol."

The shambling man, evidently a sort of general handy-man, touched his beetling brow and shuffled round to the back of the house, just as a tall, powerfully built young man in plus-fours sauntered up—a good-looking person in a hardish sort of way.

"Mr. Huntingdale, for a dollar!" said Mr. Brass to himself, shamelessly watching the couple embrace with the air of people to whom an embrace was no novelty, though still a pleasure.

"Ha! Now what would young Mr. Duxtable have to say about that, I wonder?" mused the old eavesdropper. 'Absence makes the heart grow fonder'—of some one present! Hey?"

He watched the couple pick up their golf-bags and stroll off toward the links.

"Allow nothing to interfere with their golf, evidently," said the Honorable John. He waited a few moments, then moved forward to the front of the house.

HE went very silently, for he had no desire to disturb the un-pretty gentleman at the back. Mr. Brass was distinctly a good judge of men—even abnormal men—and he was tolerably sure that the long ape-like arms hanging from that big barrel-like chest were about as strong as those of a medium he-gorilla in good health and excellent training.

It was instinct—developed by a good deal of dangerous experience—rather than knowledge which convinced the smooth old rascal that there was something queer about this place.

It was not that the old lady was said to be a little "childish"—for many quite charming old ladies are that; it was not that the retainer or serving-man looked like a cross between a chimpanzee and a plain-faced prize-fighter—lots of retainers look very little more attractive; it was not that young Mrs. Duxtable kissed Artist Huntingdale with a finish that hinted at previous practice, for any broad-minded person before condemning her would naturally wish to know something more about the lady's husband.

It was merely the Honorable John's hunting-sense which hinted to him that there was something wrong at this place; it had sprung from his first realization that the relief he had noted in the eyes of the younger woman on the links that morning was greater than the occasion called for.

He was anxious to know something more about the household generally, particularly the old lady.

He had a dim sort of notion that, out of the tail of his eye, he had seen that she was running—apparently to join in the friendly little discussion about the Colonel's poor golf—but he was not certain about that.

"Wish I was," he muttered as he moved

forward. "If that old lady had been running hard and the young woman running hard after her, then I should certainly catch just a whiff of rat somewhere. . . . Still, we'll see. Pity the Colonel's got such a habit of distracting my attention from important details. Must mention it to him."

He peered into all the windows at the front of the house—a small, double-fronted red-brick villa without any pretension to picturesqueness—the sort of place a small country builder, enriched by the war, might solemnly erect for his own habitation under the impression that he was achieving a monument to his own greatness.

Everything behind the panes looked normal enough. The rooms were furnished rather sparsely in the normal way—neither well nor ill.

He moved on round the house—rather like a leisurely but inquisitive old bear taking a look around.

There were no signs of the old lady, through any window at either of the sides or the front of the house.

He paused at one of the corners to watch the manservant busy attending to a large car just outside a garage at the back. The man was pouring petrol into the tank. He had a lighted cigarette-end in his mouth. Mr. Brass felt that *Sherlock Holmes* would instantly have produced one of his lightning deductions about him. Indeed, the Honorable John produced one himself.

"Just a plain damn' fool!" he said.

Then a peculiar thing happened.

A pane of glass smashed itself, or was smashed, in the house, in one of the rooms overlooking the garage.

Mr. Brass drew back just in time to avoid the eyes of the reckless fool pouring petrol into the car under the very nose of a lighted cigarette. A second later the man had dumped down the petrol-can and was running to the back door of the house. The Honorable John got a one-eyed glimpse of him as he went lumbering along rather like a fast land-crab.

The back door opened and shut with a little slam.

"Gone indoors to see what's wrong," said Mr. Brass. "I don't blame the lad."

He edged round the corner, took a sudden decision, and hurried to the back door.

IT was ajar. He was by no means expert about back doors—so he looked at the inner side of it, saw the key, withdrew

it, and closed and locked the door from the outside.

Then he stepped back and looked up at the back of the house. The shattered pane was in the window of a room immediately over the back porch.

Mr. Brass looked wistfully at that rather frail-appearing porch.

"It's not the sort of place for a man of my figure to go scrambling about on!" he muttered, and somewhat reluctantly, began to test the strength of a water-pipe and some Virginia creeper which covered the porch.

"Don't like it," he said to himself. "A man might get a couple of broken limbs playing the fool climbing about a thing like this! Sing's the lad for this—ought to be round about here by this time too—the lazy hound! —Ah!"

He started slightly as a figure appeared silently round the corner of the house. It was "the lazy hound" Sing, who, acting on instructions, had come on to scout around the red house until he could discreetly join forces with his dearly beloved "boss."

He grinned and offered a package about the size of a brick to Mr. Brass who took it without inquiry, and in a harsh whisper issued his further instructions to the agile tough from far Cathay.

"Get up on this porch quick and quiet, my lad. Just take a peep through that broken pane, make a note of what you see—if anything—then slither down like cats falling and be ready to bolt with me!"

He watched with a touch of envy as the hardy perennial who had worked for him so long and faithfully went up that porch like an alley-cat.

"The lad's got the figure for it. He can climb like a canary creeper," he mused.

Sing took one cautious glance into the room, withdrew his head instantly out of view of those inside, and came down like a sack of potatoes, though more silently.

Mr. Brass darted onto the porch, turned the key of the door, leaving it unlocked, hissed "Follow me!" to Sing and led the way at a portly sort of trot to the cover of the trees.

"Well, what did you see?" he demanded, though already he could guess roughly what Sing's reply would be.

It was about as he surmised: Sing had seen the old lady, sitting gagged and bound in a chair in the middle of the room. One arm was free—clearly the arm with which she had managed to throw a water-bottle



The Chink was on the gorilla-man like a springing cat. He turned—but too late. Mr. Brass was no weakling, and the Colonel about as strong as a buffalo bull.

through the window. The ugly man from the garage was engaged in retying the loose arm of the old lady to the arm of the chair.

"Huh! I see," said Mr. Brass. He thought for a moment, then glanced at his watch. "Better be getting back to the hotel," he said.

SING stared; it was evident that the saffron-hued scalawag was expecting to join his master in rescuing the old lady forthwith.

But the Honorable John thought otherwise.

"Don't fret, my lad; we shall be back before very long. Haven't you got the brains to understand that we've got to catch the Duxtable-Huntingdale combination red-handed? No, of course you haven't—why should you?"

And he led the way back to the hotel—carefully avoiding the golf-links. . . .

In the privacy of his room Mr. Brass took out the brick-shaped package which Sing had handed him.

"Now, what's all this?" he said, and cut the string.

It was money—quite a quantity of it, all in the highly convenient form of one-pound notes.

Mr. Brass looked at his yellow retainer, then at the bale of notes, then back at Sing.

"Humph!" he repeated, "what's all *this*?"—and turned the lump of money gingerly over with his fingers.

"Have to count it, I suppose, hey?" he observed. "Dry work counting money on a day like this, Sing, my son! We'd better have something. Go and get a small bottle

of the champagne we brought with us. That's for me. And while you're downstairs, look in at the bar and buy a bottle of stout. That's for you—you've been a good lad, and I'm one of those who believe in rewarding a good man."

Possibly he was—but evidently he did not believe in spoiling him. However, Sing departed grinning happily, so probably he felt sufficiently rewarded. . . .

By the time the leisurely Mr. Brass had counted the thousand pounds' worth of notes—exactly—and gleaned from the stout-imbibing Chink the story of how he had found them hidden in a grandfather's clock which was one of the chief articles of furniture in the almost unfurnished cottage occupied by Mr. Huntingdale, the afternoon was waning, and the Honorable John's champagne had waned entirely.

"I see what you mean, Sing," pronounced the old adventurer at last. "And on the whole, in a way, you might have done worse. I'm not altogether displeased with you, my lad; though, another time, just be a bit more careful. There might have been another thousand in the coal-box. Never rush things. You're getting into a queer, awkward sort of habit of rushing things. Don't do it. However—" he detached one single forlorn-looking humble note from the mass and passed it to Sing.

"There you are—that's for you," he said genially. "Don't fool it away playing fan-tan with those chauffeurs down in the garage. Keep it—save it up. Men like you with your opportunities, working for a man like me, ought to be worth a lot o' money when the time comes to retire! Hook it

now, but keep handy. I shall probably be wanting you in half an hour or so."

DELIGHTED at these few words of what he regarded as praise, Sing withdrew. He was rather like a well-trained retriever. Anything he found in any place to which he was sent by his owner he carried gladly back to Mr. Brass intact, though he would probably have bitten the hand off anybody else who had reached for whatever he was carrying. But it was Mr. Brass who many years before had bought him, unconscious, for a sum which is popularly known as "five bob" from a tired policeman who, on returning home, had found him in the gutter into which certain of Sing's compatriots had tidily deposited him after drugging and robbing him. That had been in the days of Sing's youth and inexperience. He had grown out of youth and inexperience—but not out of gratitude to his possessor. . . .

Mr. Brass, like a giant refreshed, strolled through the sunny peace of the declining afternoon toward the eighteenth green, where he took a seat and a cigar. He had not long to wait. Mrs. Duxtable and Mr. Huntingdale were driving from the last tee as he arrived.

The Honorable John chuckled as he noted that the dour Clumber, evidently having scraped some sort of acquaintance, was carrying the lady's bag, with every symptom of enjoying the job.

Mr. Brass did not await their arrival on the green, as they came on. Like a careful general, he withdrew, "according to plan." From a well-judged distance the Honorable John saw them hole out, noted the lady take her bag, shake off the Colonel—who looked as if he were hanging around for an invitation to tea—and with the man Huntingdale, depart in peace towards the red house.

MR. BRASS awaited his partner, who came glooming morosely along like a man with a wasted afternoon to look back upon.

"Come on, man, come on! Stir your stumps—we've only got a few minutes before us," said the senior partner, as he turned to the hotel and beckoned the distant Sing.

Mr. Brass was watching the dwindling figures of the golfers.

"We'll follow just as soon as they get to the edge of the trees," he said.

The Colonel stared at him.

"I suppose you could give some sort of a guess at what you're driving at—if pressed by a smart lawyer—but I can't!" he said.

"No, I know—I know you can't," agreed Mr. Brass. "I'll tell you as we go. And before we even start I can tell you that you've spent most of your afternoon carting round the golf-clubs of a very dangerous she-crook."

"What d'ye mean—Beryl Duxtable a she-crook?" demanded the Colonel.

"Every inch of her," insisted the Honorable John. "You'll see! Huntingdale's another. There they go—out of sight. Here's Sing. —Follow us, my lad. Come on, Colonel. Liven yourself up a little—for we're on serious business!" Mr. Brass rapped out his orders so imperiously that even his obstinate partner went along with no more emphatic demur than a demand to be told what was what, then and there.

SO Mr. Brass told him as much as he thought was good for him.

"You mean to say that they got the old lady roped and gagged in that house?" echoed the Colonel. "Why?"

"That's what we're going to find out if we can. And we shall. Trust the wise old thinker of this little firm!" said the Honorable John. "They're leaving for London after tea—and I have a notion that 'tea' means to them a couple of large, brown Scotch whiskies and sodas apiece! I may be wrong (though I'm probably right) but I fancy those two are getting away for good today."

They hurried into the shadow of the belt of trees separating the red house from the links. There Mr. Brass gave his last instructions.

All went well. . . .

From the tree they saw the car standing at the front of the house facing toward the main road.

The plain-featured person who acted as handy-man was leaning over the engine with an oil-can.

"Couldn't be more convenient," whispered Mr. Brass and signed to Sing. The Chink glided out, and was on the gorilla-man like a springing cat. He turned with a sort of growl—but he was too late. He was immensely powerful—but so was Sing; Mr. Brass was distinctly no weakling and the Colonel was about as feeble as a buffalo bull.

So they pacified the man without much

difficulty or noise, tied his hands, gave him a notion of what a gag, similar to that of the old lady's, felt like, and dumped him down in the car—"to rest," said Mr. Brass.

Then the two moved into the house through the half-open front door. This was evidently one of the occasions upon which Mr. Brass deemed it discreet to depart from his rule of going about his business unarmed, for each of them held now a pistol big enough to blow large holes

Clumber never had known how to be bland, and Sing was about as much like the proverbial bland Chinese as a bear-cat in a hornet's nest.

The "artist" spoke first—and he addressed the attractive Mrs. Duxtable in tones of some ferocity.

"There you are!" he snarled; "*there* you are! I tipped you off at the eleventh that the cheap old skate was a detective, didn't I? But no, *no*—you amateur vamp, that



through a rhinoceros. The Honorable John had thoughtfully brought one for Colonel Clumber.

IN the narrow hall they paused to listen.

Just as he expected, Mr. Brass heard voices—not too loud—in that back room through the window of which the old lady had managed to hurl a water-bottle.

He signaled and they went up the stairs like large and silent grizzly bears.

Mr. Brass threw open the door with his left hand, and introduced the battery in his right, following it personally immediately after.

"I'll blow the head off the first of you who acts rough!" he said.

Mrs. Duxtable and Mr. Huntingdale whirled like startled tigers.

But they steadied as they saw the three black pistol muzzles, and the grim, hard, menacing eyes behind those muzzles.

Mr. Brass—engaged as he was on his business—was no longer bland: Colonel

wasn't good enough for you, was it? He was just another poor old adorer that wanted to singe his wings in your beautiful illumination, wasn't he? That was what you said—"

Here the Colonel moved forward.

"One more small syllable of that sort out of you, Hubert, and I'll knock your block out of true!" he growled.

Hubert held back the remaining syllables. The woman did likewise.

Mr. Brass moved up, looking quite deadly behind his awesome firearm.

"Stand back—*get* back—you two!" he said savagely.

They looked once at his pale jade eyes—and stood back, clear of the mute old lady over whose chair they had been bending.

"Keep them so," said the Honorable John to his partner; and Sing bent over the old lady, gently removing the gag.

She was a tough-looking and stringy old lady

"Now tell us, my dear," said Mr. Brass, "just what it's all about. What your name is, and how much you're worth, and why they did this to you. Don't be afraid—don't—"

"I am not afraid—don't be foolish!" snapped the indomitable old dame. "I am Lady Jane Dumbartington. I live in hotels, mainly, for I *will not* be pestered by my relatives who are all after my money!"

Her jaws clamped like crabs' claws at the mention of her money.

"These appalling creatures kidnaped me—at least, *she* did. She claims to be the wife of my only son Gervase—a thoroughly bad lot whom I cut off with a shilling years ago. She says that she is an actress whom Gervase married for her money in Paris some years ago. She says Gervase spent all her money, then deserted her and has never been heard of since. So she, and her friend—*bah!*—kidnaped me, brought me here and tried to frighten me into repaying the money she says Gervase spent. I gave them some—but they weren't satisfied. They didn't play fair—they kept me here—a woman of my means and standing! When you came they were threatening to kill me if I did not write them a check for five thousand pounds, and a letter to the bank instructing them to honor it. So release me, my man, and lock 'em up—lock 'em up! . . . I don't believe she ever met Gervase in her life. He's a young blackguard, certainly, but he always had good taste!"

"Certainly, Lady Jane. Just as soon as we can manage," said Mr. Brass vaguely, and turned to the two crooks.

"It was pretty barefaced," he said. "Anything you want to say?"

Mr. Huntingdale said nothing; Mrs. Duxtable made a noise like an angry cat.

MR. BRASS thought for a moment.

"But what about this morning, Lady Jane?" he asked. "What were you doing on the golf-links?"

"Why, you stupid fellow, I had managed to get loose and I was running to ask for the protection of two fat golfers—one was rather like you—but *she* caught me just in time and brought me back. She's a very strong woman."

"I see," said Mr. Brass. "Very well."

He addressed his partner.

"Just release Lady Jane," he said, "while I get these criminals downstairs into safety."

He jerked his big head at the door, indicating his desires with a gesture of his pistol-filled hand.

Obediently Mr. Huntingdale and Mrs. Duxtable moved to the door and out, followed by the grim Mr. Brass.

"Get into the room on the right," he said savagely, as they went downstairs.

They did so.

"Stay here!" said the Honorable John, looking in on them. "Try any funny business and you will be all stodged up with lead before you can guess what's which!"

He shut the door and locked it loudly.

Then he tramped heavily back up the stairs. But he did not return immediately to witness the release of the Lady Jane, and the heaviness of his steps vanished oddly when he reached the top of the stairs. In spite of his portliness he moved as lightly as a ballet-dancer—lighter, indeed, than some of the "Dying Swans" of recent years—and he moved fast. The second bedroom he entered was the one he sought—that of Mrs. Duxtable.

Mr. Brass already had her fellow-crook's careful accumulation. All that remained to do now was to get the full-blown Beryl's.

IT took him just three minutes and a half to find it—the little twin brother to Huntingdale's packet of notes, quietly stowed away in two portions, in the feet of a pair of old riding-boots in a cupboard. Mr. Brass knew he had found it, the moment he set eyes on the boots—they were far too big and shabby for Mrs. Duxtable and the trees in them were sticking out much too far.

"Still, it wasn't a bad hiding-place—for stuff which she thought would never be searched for, anyway," he said blandly; then he put the money where it would do no harm, and returned to Lady Jane and her rescuers.

The indomitable old lady was striding about, talking like one a long way behind with her conversation. She was autocratic, imperious, despotic and inclined to be tyrannical. She demanded that the Duxtable-Huntingdale pair be locked up forthwith for all eternity, and she looked as if she felt privately that it wouldn't matter much if Mr. Brass and his friends were locked up with them!

But the Honorable John spoke to her gently, mentioned the close proximity of the comfortable hotel, and was generally soothing.

"I suggest that you allow my friend and me to escort you to the hotel while my servant guards these two people till the police can be sent for them. I have them safely under lock and key downstairs!" he asserted.

She stared.

"Where, man, where? In the cellar?"

"No, Lady Jane—in the front room!"

She wheeled on him.

"Anybody guarding them, man?"

Mr. Brass smiled.

"No—but I've got them locked in!" And he showed the key.

"Why, you stupid fellow, what about the window? Good gracious, can't any of you men ever use your intelligence?"

The Honorable John's jaw fell most realistically.

"Eh? Never thought of that!"

The fierce old lady dashed past him and down the stairs. But she dashed in vain; even as she had so cleverly explained, the two crooks had thought of the window and used it—their car was already fast receding down the drive.

"There—you see, idiot? There they go with nearly three thousand pounds of mine in that car! Oh, I've no patience! Come along, come along, take me to the hotel, and send for the police!"

SO they took her there, and handed her over to the manager—who, oddly enough, proved to be an old acquaintance of hers. He had once managed a hotel she had harassed at Bournemouth.

She was, as the manager subsequently informed Mr. Brass and partner, worth about twenty thousand a year, though she required as much attention as if she had twenty million—and, he added, she wanted to pay for it as if she had about twenty pounds a year.

"A queer, savage old bird," said the manager. "But what can you do? Turn 'em away? Not with the hotel business in its present state! And there are thousands like her—thousands! Drifting about, nagg-ing around from home to hotel, from hotel to hydro, from hydro to—well, you know how it is. These old ladies have got no real vice in 'em, but they're rum 'uns, most of 'em. They outlive the poor mutts that sweated 'emselves into an early grave making the money—and in a year or two they honestly think they made the money themselves. They're fair game for every crook

in Christendom—if the crook can get away with it. Mostly, he can't. They're tough. Tough! They're pretty near indestructible, these old hotel-dwellers! I'd hate to be the next crook that tries to wish something onto Lady Jane— Hey, what's that?" He turned to a hovering waiter. "Lady Jane insists on seeing the manager *at once!* Oh, certainly! Any little thing like that—huh!"

The man made a grimace at the partners and hurried away.

Mr. Brass and the Colonel half-grinned at each other, and went to the Honorable John's room.

"Queer affair!" said the Colonel, over a bottle. "Nice, smart girl, too."

"Who? Lady Jane?" said Mr. Brass satirically. "The other was neither smart nor nice."

"Huh! She was smart enough to get away with her plunder, anyway! One would have thought that such a sharp set of brains as yours might have seen a way for us to make a trifle out of all our trouble."

A WAITER knocked, and entered bearing a box of cigars on a tray.

"With Lady Jane Dumbartington's compliments, gentlemen," he said, and left.

Mr. Brass opened the box, sniffed at the contents, then offered the box to the Colonel.

"Have a cigar, Squire," he said genially. "You see, we *have* got something out of the affair, after all."

"What?" said the Colonel, smelling at the cigars. "You don't call this box of herbage anything, do you?"

"I wasn't speaking of the material in that box," said the Honorable John mildly, as he drew forth two brick-shaped wads. "I was speaking of *this* particular herbage! There you are—one for you, one for me, a thousand apiece. I dropped over there and collected it while you were sleeping your lunch off. I'll tell you all about it in a minute. Not bad for the old man, hey? A thousand apiece for us—and a box of something or other to smoke, for Sing!"

"The poor hound!" said the Colonel pityingly.

"Not he, Squire; he'll enjoy 'em—he and his pals in the garage. Pass the whisky, and listen; there's just time to tell you before dinner. The whisky, man—pass it here! Thanks!"

Another blithe exploit of these irrepressible rogues will appear in an early issue.

TARZAN

at the Earth's Core

Wherein Tarzan is made captive by the mounted reptile-men called Horibs, and endures other dire perils. . . . A splendid installment in the greatest romance of our times.



By EDGAR RICE BURROUGHS

Illustrated by Frank Hoban

The Story So Far:

TO Tarzan at home in his African jungle kingdom came Jason Gridley, who sought to ask his help in the most stupendous adventure ever undertaken by man—a journey by air to the uncharted world of Pellucidar. Two men, indeed, had penetrated to this wild primeval world at the core of this our earth—David Innes and Abner Perry: while experimenting with a tremendously powerful “iron mole,” a boring device designed to prospect in the earth’s crust for valuable minerals, David and Abner lost control and presently found themselves in this strange reversed cosmos of Pellucidar; and the fascinating story of the amazing things that happened to them came to Edgar Rice Burroughs by means of the far-reaching waves of a remarkable radio designed by his friend Jason Gridley.

The last message received showed that Innes was in dire peril, a captive to the savage Korsarians; the message told, likewise, of strong evidence that a passage between the inner world and our outer one

existed near the North Pole. Jason Gridley wished, in brief, the help of the most valiant of all adventurers—Tarzan—for this most perilous of all undertakings.

Tarzan joined up. And in a helium-lifted dirigible Jason Gridley, Tarzan, his attendant Waziri spearmen and a dozen men of the crew reached the Polar path easily, descended to Pellucidar and moored their ship with its small companion airplane. The rest was by no means easy, however; for Tarzan, venturing forth on foot, was caught and jerked up into the air by a huge snare set for a tiger—and the tiger himself soon after appeared.

The ape-like creatures who had set the snare drove off the tiger and rescued Tarzan. Later, when a fight arose between two rivals for leadership Tarzan joined the loser Tar-gash, and fled with him.

Meanwhile an expedition sent out from the airship to rescue Tarzan was attacked and scattered by the giant beasts of Pellucidar’s appalling jungle. Jason Gridley

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One of the Horibs spoke. "You cannot escape," he said. "Lay down your weapons."

alone contrived to make his way back to the airship. And he, after a brief rest, at once set out in the small scout plane carried by the dirigible, to find and save Tarzan and his other comrades. A giant flying reptile attacked the plane, however, and only the parachute saved Gridley when plane and prehistoric monster crashed to the earth together. Unhurt, Gridley set forth alone on foot; and with his modern weapons was able to rescue a maiden about to be carried off by men of a lower and hostile race. With Jana, then,—the Red Flower as she was called,—Gridley set off on foot toward her native Zoram. Soon, however, a violent storm arose; and Jana, who had left Gridley after a quarrel, now became definitely separated from him by the fury of the flood. Barely escaping with his own life, Gridley soon afterward saved a native warrior from a dinosaur—and learned with amazement that this native Thoar had been a comrade of Tarzan and had seen Tarzan killed.

With Thoar, who was searching for Jana, Gridley came to the land of the swamp-people, the Phelians.

In this interval Tarzan had indeed been near death, but Thoar's report was in error. While journeying with this chance-met comrade Thoar, a gigantic pteranodon whose enormous batlike wings and utter ferocity made it the most feared creature in Pellucidar, swept down and carried off Tarzan to its eyrie. But there Tarzan killed the creature, made his escape and later rescued a native boy from a cave-bear. The boy guided Tarzan to his village, where the ape-man found as a fellow captive in a cavern dungeon the girl Jana. (*The story continues in detail:*)

JANA raised her eyes above the level of the grasses and looked in the direction that Tarzan was gazing. She shuddered. "They are not men," she said; "they are the Horibs and the things upon the backs of which they ride are Gorobors. If they

see us we are lost. Nothing in the world can escape the Gorobors, for there is nothing in all Pellucidar so swift as they. Lie still. Our only chance is that they may not discover us."

At sight of the Horibs the Gyor emitted a terrific bellow that shook the ground and, lowering his head, he charged straight for them. Fully fifty of the Horibs on their horrid mounts had emerged from the ravine. Tarzan could see that the riders were armed with long lances—pitiful and inadequate weapons, he thought, with which to face an enraged Triceratop. But it soon became apparent that the Horibs did not intend to meet that charge head-on. Wheeling to their right they formed in single file behind their leader and then for the first time Tarzan had an exhibition of the phenomenal speed of the huge lizards upon which they were mounted, a speed comparable only to the lightning-like rapidity of a tiny desert lizard known as a swift.

Following tactics similar to those of the plains Indians of western America, the Horibs were circling their prey. The bellowing Gyor, aroused to a frenzy of rage, charged first in one direction and then another, but the Gorobors darted from his path so swiftly that he never could overtake them. Panting and blowing, he presently came to bay and then the Horibs drew their circle closer, whirling dizzily about him, while Tarzan watched the amazing scene, wondering by what means they might ever hope to dispatch the ten tons of incarnate fury that wheeled first this way and then that at the center of their circle.

PRESENTLY a Horib darted in close to the Gyor at such speed that the mount and the rider were little more than a blur. The Gyor wheeled to meet him, head down, the three terrible horns set to impale him, and then two other Horibs darted in from the rear upon either side.

As swiftly as they had darted in all three wheeled and were out again, part of the racing circle, but in the sides of the Gyor they had left two lances deeply imbedded. The fury of the wounded Triceratop transcended any of his previous demonstrations. His bellowing became a hoarse, coughing scream as once again he lowered his head and charged.

This time he did not turn and charge in another direction as he had in the past, but kept on in a straight line, possibly in the hope of breaking through the encircling

Horibs, and to his dismay the ape-man saw that he and Jana were directly in the path of the charging beast. If the Horibs did not turn him, they were lost.

A dozen of the reptile-men darted in upon the rear of the Gyor. A dozen more lances sank deeply into its body, proving sufficient to turn him in an effort to avenge these new injuries.

This charge had carried the Gyor within fifty feet of Tarzan and Jana. It had given the ape-man an uncomfortable moment, but its results were almost equally disastrous, for it brought the circling Horibs close to their position.

THE Gyor stood now with lowered head, breathing heavily and bleeding from more than a dozen wounds. A Horib now rode slowly toward him, approaching him directly from in front. The attention of the Triceratop was centered wholly upon this single adversary as two more moved toward him diagonally from the rear, one on either side, but in such a manner that they were concealed from his view by the great transverse crest encircling his neck behind the horns and eyes. The three approached thus to within about fifty feet of the brute and then those in the rear darted forward simultaneously at terrific speed, leaning well forward upon their mounts, their lances lowered. At the same instant each struck heavily upon either side of the Gyor, driving their spears far in. So close did they come to their prey that their mounts struck the shoulders of the Gyor as they turned and darted out again.

For an instant the great creature stood reeling in its tracks and then it slumped forward heavily and rolled over upon its side—the final lances had pierced its heart.

Tarzan was glad that it was over, for he had momentarily feared discovery by the circling Horibs and he was congratulating himself upon their good fortune—when the whole band of snake-men wheeled their mounts and raced swiftly in the direction of the fugitives' hiding-place. Once more they formed their circle, but this time Tarzan and Jana were at its center. Evidently the Horibs had seen them, but had temporarily ignored them until after they had dispatched the Gyor.

"We shall have to fight," said Tarzan; and as concealment was no longer possible he arose to his feet.

"Yes," said Jana, arising to stand beside him. "We shall have to fight, but the end

will be the same. There are fifty of them and we are but two."

Tarzan fitted an arrow to his bow. The Horibs were circling slowly about them, inspecting their new prey.

Now for the first time Tarzan was able to obtain a good view of the snake-men and their equally hideous mounts. The conformation of the Horibs was almost identical to man in so far as the torso and extremities were concerned. Their three-toed feet and five-toed hands were those of reptiles. The head and face resembled a

each Horib carried a long lance shod with bone. They sat on their grotesque mounts with their toes locked behind the elbows of the Gorobors, anomodont reptiles of the Triassic, known to paleontologists as *Paraeiasauri*. Many of these creatures measured ten feet in length, though they stood low upon squat and powerful legs.

As Tarzan gazed in fascination upon the Horibs, whose "blood ran cold and who had no hearts," he realized that he might be gazing upon one of the vagaries of evolution. Nor did it seem to him, after re-



"I'll show you who I am!" shouted the other Korsarian, whipping out his knife. Like a panther Lajo swung upon his adversary.

snake, but pointed ears and two short horns gave a grotesque appearance that was at the same time hideous. The arms were better proportioned than the legs, which were quite shapeless. The entire body was covered with scales, although those upon the hands, feet and face were so minute as to give the impression of bare skin, a resemblance which was further emphasized by the fact that these portions of the body were a much lighter color, approximating the shiny dead whiteness of a snake's belly.

They wore a single apron-like garment fashioned from a piece of very heavy hide, apparently that of some gigantic reptile. This garment was really a piece of armor, its sole purpose being, as Tarzan later learned, to cover the soft, white bellies of the Horibs. Upon the breast of each garment was a strange device—an eight-pronged cross with a circle in the center. Around his waist each Horib wore a leather belt, which supported a scabbard in which was inserted a bone knife. About each wrist and above each elbow was a band or bracelet. These completed their apparel and ornaments. In addition to his knife

flection, any more remarkable that a man-like reptile might evolve from reptiles as that birds should have done so or, as scientific discoveries are now demonstrating, mammals must have.

These thoughts passed quickly, almost instantaneously, through his mind as the Horibs sat there with their beady, lidless eyes fastened upon them, but if Tarzan had been astounded by the appearance of these creatures the emotion thus aroused was nothing compared with the shock he received when one of them spoke, addressing him in the common language of the gilaks of Pellucidar.

"You cannot escape," he said. "Lay down your weapons."

CHAPTER XVIII

THROUGH THE DARK FOREST

JASON GRIDLEY ran swiftly up the hill toward the Phelian village in which he hoped to find the Red Flower of Zoram, and at his side was Thoar, ready with spear and knife to rescue or avenge his sis-

ter, while behind them, concealed by the underbrush that grew beneath the trees along the river's bank, a company of swarthy, bearded men watched the two.

To Thoar's surprise no defending warriors rushed from the building they were approaching, nor did any sound come from the interior. "Be careful," he cautioned Jason, "we may be running into a trap."

To the very entrance of the building they came and as yet no opposition to their advance had manifested itself.

Jason stopped and looked through the low doorway, then, stooping, he entered with Thoar at his heels.

"There is no one here," said Jason; "the building is deserted."

"Better luck in the next one then," said Thoar; but there was no one in the next building, nor in the next, nor in any of the buildings of the Phelian village.

"They have all gone," said Jason.

"Yes," replied Thoar, "but they will return. Let us go down among the trees at the riverside and wait for them there in hiding."

Unconscious of danger, the two walked down the hillside and entered the underbrush that grew luxuriously beneath the trees. They followed a narrow trail, worn by Phelian sandals.

SCARCELY had the foliage closed about them when a dozen men sprang upon them and bore them to the ground. In an instant they were disarmed and their wrists bound behind their backs; then they were jerked roughly to their feet and Jason Gridley's eyes went wide as they got the first glimpse of his captors.

"Well, for Pete's sake!" he exclaimed. "I have learned to look with comparative composure upon woolly rhinoceroses, mammoths, trachodons, pterodactyls and dinosaurs, but I never expected to see Captain Kidd, Lafitte and Sir Henry Morgan in the very heart of Pellucidar!"

In his surprise he reverted to his native tongue, which, of course, none of the others understood.

"What language is that?" demanded one of their captors. "Who are you and from what country do you come?"

"That is good old American, from the U. S. A.," replied Jason; "but who the devil are you and why have you captured us?" And then, turning to Thoar, he said: "These are not the Phelians, are they?"

"No," replied Thoar. "These are indeed

strange men, such as I have never before seen."

"We know who you are," said one of the bearded men. "We know the country from which you come. Do not try to deceive us."

"Very well, then, if you know, turn me loose, for you must know that we haven't a war on with anyone."

"Your country is always at war with Korsar," replied the speaker. "You are a Sarian. I know it by the weapons that you carry. The moment I saw them, I knew that you were from distant Sari. The Cid will be glad to have you and so will Bulf. Perhaps," he added, turning to one of his fellows, "this is Tanar, himself. Did you see him when he was a prisoner in Korsar?"

"No, I was away upon a cruise," replied the other. "I did not see him, but if this is indeed he we shall be well rewarded."

"We might as well return to the ship now," said the first speaker. "There is no use waiting any longer for these flat-footed natives with but slight chance of finding a good-looking woman among them."

"They told us farther down the river that these people sometimes captured women from Zoram. Perhaps it would be well to wait."

"No," said the other, "I should like well enough to see one of these women from Zoram that I have heard of all my life, but the natives will not return as long as we are in the vicinity. We have been gone from the ship too long now and if I know the captain, he will be wanting to slit a few throats by the time we get back."

MOORED to a tree along the shore and guarded by five other Korsarians was a ship's longboat, but it was of a style as reminiscent of Jason's boyhood reading as were the bearded men with their bizarre costumes, their great pistols and cutlasses and their ancient arquebuses.

The prisoners were bundled into the boat, the Korsars entered and the craft was pushed off into the stream which here was narrow and swift.

As the current bore them rapidly along Jason had an opportunity to examine his captors. They were as villainous-looking a crew as he had ever imagined outside of fiction and were more typically piratical than the fiercest pirates of his imagination. What with earrings and, in some instances, nose-rings of gold, with the gay handker-

chiefs bound about their heads and body sashes around their waists, they would have presented a colorful picture at a distance sufficiently great to transform their dirt and patches into a pleasing texture.

Although in the story of Tanar of Pellucidar that Jason had received by radio from Perry, he had been apprised of the appearance and nature of the Korsarians, yet he now realized that heretofore he had accepted them more as he had accepted the pirates of history and of his boyhood reading—as fictionary or, at best, legendary—and not men of flesh and bone such as he saw before him, their mouths filled with oaths and coarse jokes.

In these savage Korsarians, their boat, their apparel and their ancient firearms, Jason saw conclusive proof of their descent from men of the outer crust and realized how they must have carried to the mind of David Innes an overwhelming conviction of the existence of a Polar opening leading from Pellucidar to the outer world.

WHILE Thoar was disheartened by the fate that had thrown them into the hands of these strange people, Jason was not at all sure but that it might prove a stroke of fortune for himself, since from the conversation and comments that he had heard since their capture it seemed reasonable to assume that they were to be taken to Korsar, the city in which David Innes was confined and which was, therefore, the first goal of their expedition to effect the rescue of the Emperor of Pellucidar.

That he would arrive there alone and a prisoner were not in themselves causes for rejoicing; yet, on the whole, he would be no worse off than to remain wandering aimlessly through a country filled with unknown dangers without the faintest shadow of a hope of ever being able to locate his fellows. Now, at least, he was almost certain of being transported to a place that they also were attempting to reach and thus the chances of a reunion were so much the greater.

The stream down which they floated wound through a swampy forest, crossing numerous lagoons that sometimes were of a size that raised them to the dignity of lakes. Everywhere the waters and the banks teemed with reptilian life, suggesting to Jason Gridley that he was reviewing a scene such as might have been enacted in a Mesozoic paradise countless ages before upon the outer crust. So numerous and

oftentimes so colossal and belligerent were the savage reptiles that the descent of the river became a running fight, during which the Korsarians were constantly upon the alert and frequently were compelled to discharge their arquebuses in defense of their lives. More often than not the noise of the weapons frightened off the attacking reptiles, but occasionally one would persist in its attack until it had been killed; nor was the possibility ever remote that in one of these encounters some fierce and brainless saurian might demolish their craft and with its fellows devour the crew.

JASON and Thoar had been placed in the middle of the boat, where they squatted upon the bottom, their wrists still secured behind their backs. Close to Jason was a Korsar whom his fellows addressed as Lajo. There was something about this fellow that attracted Jason's particular attention. Perhaps it was his more open countenance or a less savage and profane demeanor. He had not joined the others in the coarse jokes that were directed against their captives; in fact, he paid little attention to anything other than the business of defending the boat against the attacking monsters.

There seemed to be no one in command of the party, all matters being discussed among them and in this way a decision arrived at; yet Jason had noticed that the others listened attentively when Lajo spoke. Guided by the result of these observations, he selected Lajo as the most logical Korsarian through whom to make a request. At the first opportunity, therefore, he attracted the man's attention.

"What do you want?" asked Lajo.

"Who is in command here?" asked Jason.

"No one," replied the Korsarian. "Our officer was killed on the way up. Why do you ask?"

"I want the bonds removed from our wrists," replied Jason. "We cannot escape. We are unarmed and outnumbered and, therefore, cannot harm you; while in the event that the boat is destroyed or capsized by any of these reptiles we shall be helpless with our wrists tied behind our backs."

Lajo drew his knife. "What are you going to do?" asked one of the other Korsarians who had overheard.

"I am going to cut their bonds," replied Lajo. "There is nothing to be gained by keeping them bound."

"Who are you to say that their bonds



shall be cut?" demanded the other belligerently.

"Who are you to say that they shall not?" returned Lajo quietly.

"I'll show you who I am," shouted the other Korsarian, whipping out his knife and advancing toward Lajo.

There was no hesitation. Like a panther Lajo swung upon his adversary, striking up the other's knife-hand with his left forearm and at the same time plunging his villainous-looking blade to the hilt in the other's breast. Voicing a single blood-curdling scream, the man sank lifeless to the bottom of the boat. Lajo wrenched his knife from the corpse, wiped it upon his adversary's shirt and quietly cut the bonds that confined the wrists of Thoar and Jason. The other Korsarians looked on, apparently unmoved by the killing of their fellow, except for a coarse joke or two at the expense of the dead man and a grunt of approbation of Lajo's act.

The killer removed the weapons from the body of the dead man and cast them aft out of reach of the prisoners. Then he motioned toward the corpse. "Throw it overboard," he commanded, addressing Jason and Thoar.

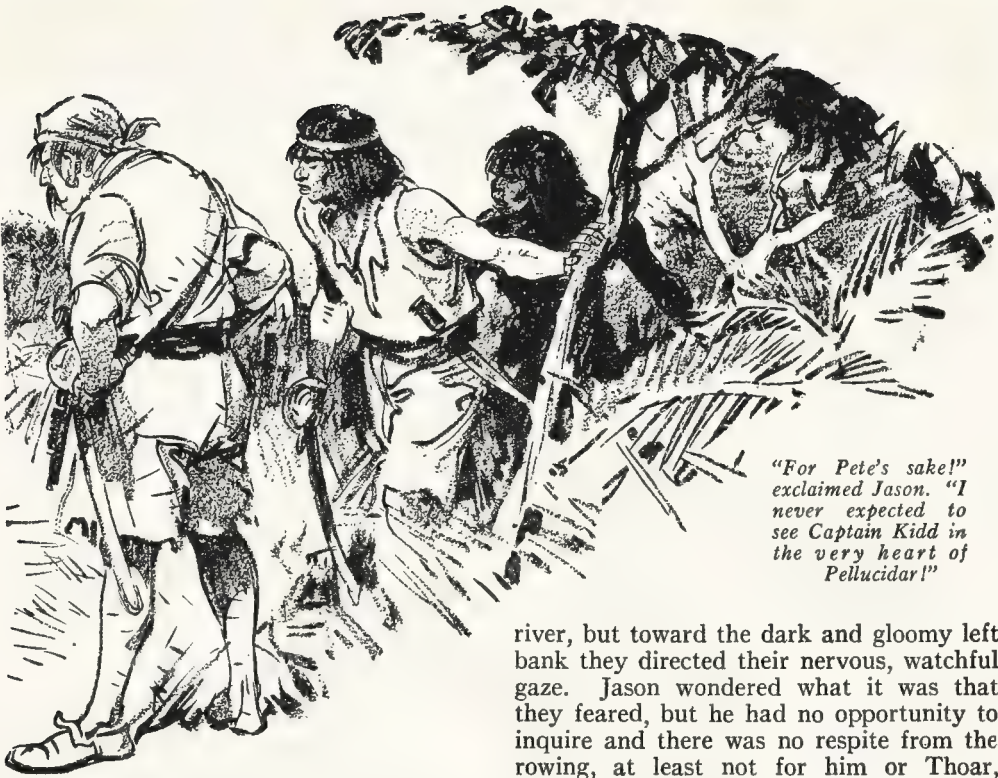
"Wait," cried another member of the crew. "I want his boots"

"His sash is mine," cried another, and presently half a dozen of them were quarreling over the belongings of the corpse like a pack of dogs over a bone. Lajo took no part in this altercation and presently the few ragged clothes which had served to cover the nakedness of the dead man were torn from his corpse and divided among them by the simple expedient of permitting the stronger to take what they could; then Jason and Thoar eased the naked body over the side, where it was immediately seized upon by voracious denizens of the river.

INTERMINABLE, to an unknown destination, seemed the journey to Jason. They ate and slept many times and still the river wound through the endless swamp. The luxuriant vegetation and flowering blooms which lined the banks long since had ceased to interest, their persistent monotony making them almost hateful to the eyes.

Jason could not but wonder at the superhuman efforts that must have been necessary to row this large, heavy boat upstream in the face of all the terrific assaults which must have been launched upon it by the reptilian hordes that contested every mile of the downward journey.

But presently the landscape changed, the



*"For Pete's sake!"
exclaimed Jason. "I
never expected to
see Captain Kidd in
the very heart of
Pellucidar!"*

river widened and the low swamp gave way to rolling hills. The forests, which still lined the banks, were freer from underbrush, suggesting that they might be the feeding-grounds of droves of herbivorous animals, a theory that was soon substantiated by sight of grazing herds, among which Jason recognized red deer, bison, bos and several other species of herbivorous animals. The forest upon the right bank was open and sunny and with its grazing herds presented a cheerful aspect of warmth and life, but the forest upon the left bank was dark and gloomy. The foliage of the trees, which grew to tremendous proportions, was so dense as practically to shut out the sunlight.

There were fewer reptiles in the stream here, but the Korsarians appeared unusually nervous and apprehensive of danger after they entered this stretch of the river. Previously they had been drifting with the current, using but a single oar, scull fashion, from the stern to keep the nose of the boat pointed downstream, but now they manned the oars, pressing Jason and Thoar into service to row with the others. Loaded arquebuses lay beside the oarsmen, while in the bow and stern armed men were constantly upon watch. They paid little attention to the right bank of the

river, but toward the dark and gloomy left bank they directed their nervous, watchful gaze. Jason wondered what it was that they feared, but he had no opportunity to inquire and there was no respite from the rowing, at least not for him or Thoar, though the Korsarians alternated between watching and rowing.

Between the use of the oars and the current they made excellent progress, though whether they were close to the end of the danger-zone or not, Jason had no means of knowing any more than he could guess the nature of the menace which must certainly threaten them if aught could be judged by the attitude of the Korsarians.

The two prisoners were upon the verge of exhaustion when Lajo noticed their condition and relieved them from the oars. How long they had been rowing, Jason could not determine, although he knew that while no one had either eaten or slept since they had entered this stretch of the river, the time must have been considerable. The distance they had come Jason estimated roughly at something over a hundred miles, and he and Thoar had been continuously at the oars during the entire period, without food or sleep; but they had barely thrown themselves to the bottom of the boat when a cry, vibrant with excitement, arose from the bow.

"There they are!" shouted the man, and instantly all was excitement aboard the boat.

"Keep to the oars," shouted Lajo. "Our best chance is to run through them."

Although almost too spent with fatigue

to find interest even in impending death, Jason dragged himself to a sitting position that raised his eyes above the level of the gunwales of the boat. At first he could not even vaguely classify the horde of creatures swimming out upon the bosom of the placid river with the evident intention of intercepting them, but presently he saw that they were man-like creatures riding upon the backs of hideous reptiles. They bore long lances and their scaly mounts sped through the waters at incredible speed. As the boat approached them he saw that the creatures were not men, though they had the forms of men, but were reptiles with lizard-like heads to whose naturally frightful mien, pointed ears and short horns added a horrid grotesquery.

"My God!" he cried. "What are they?"

Thoar, who had also dragged himself to a sitting posture, shuddered. "They are the Horibs," he said. "It is better to die than to fall into their clutches."

CARRIED downward by the current and urged on by the long sweeps and its own terrific momentum, the heavy boat shot straight toward the hideous horde. The distance separating them was rapidly closing; the boat was almost upon the leading Horib when an arquebus in the bow spoke. Its loud report broke the menacing silence that had overhung the river like a pall. Directly in front of the boat's prow the horde of Horibs separated and a moment later they were racing along on either side of the craft. Arquebuses were belching smoke and fire, scattering the bits of iron and pebbles with which they were loaded among the hissing enemy, but for every Horib that fell there were two to take its place.

Now they withdrew to a little distance, but with apparently no effort whatever their reptilian mounts kept pace with the boat and then, one after another on either side, a rider would dart in and cast his lance; nor apparently ever did one miss its mark. So deadly was their aim that the Korsarians were compelled to abandon their oars and drop down into the bottom of the boat, raising themselves above the gunwales only long enough to fire their arquebuses, when they would again drop down into concealment to reload. But even these tactics could not preserve them for long, since the Horibs, darting in still closer to the side of the boat, could reach over the edge and lance the inmates. Straight to

the muzzles of the arquebuses they came, apparently entirely devoid of any conception of fear; great holes were blown entirely through the bodies of some, others were decapitated, while more than a score lost a hand or an arm, yet still they came.

Presently one succeeded in casting the noose of a long leather rope over a cleat upon the gunwale and instantly several of the Horibs seized it and headed their mounts toward the river's bank.

Practically exhausted and without weapons to defend themselves, Jason and Thoar had remained lying upon the bottom of the boat almost past caring what fate befell them. Half covered by the corpses of the Korsarians that had fallen, they lay in a pool of blood. About them arquebuses still roared amid screams and curses, and above all rose the shrill, hissing screech that seemed to be the war-cry of the Horibs.

The boat was dragged to shore and the rope made fast about the bole of a tree, though three times the Korsarians had cut the line and three times the Horibs had been forced to replace it.

Only a handful of the crew had not been killed or wounded when the Horibs left their mounts and swarmed over the gunwales to fall upon their prey. Cutlasses, knives and arquebuses did their deadly work, but still the slimy snake-men came, crawling over the bodies of their dead to fall upon the survivors until the latter were practically buried by greater numbers.

When the battle was over there were but three Korsarians who had escaped death or serious wounds—Lajo was one of them. The Horibs bound their wrists and took them ashore, after which they started unloading the dead and wounded from the boat, killing the more seriously wounded with their knives. Coming at last upon Jason and Thoar and finding them unwounded, they bound them as they had the living Korsarians and placed them with the other prisoners on the shore.

THE battle over, the prisoners secured, the Horibs now fell upon the corpses of the dead, nor did they rest until they had devoured them all, while Jason and his fellow prisoners sat nauseated with horror during the grisly feast. Even the Korsarians, cruel and heartless as they were, shuddered at the sight.

"Why do you suppose they are saving us?" asked Jason.

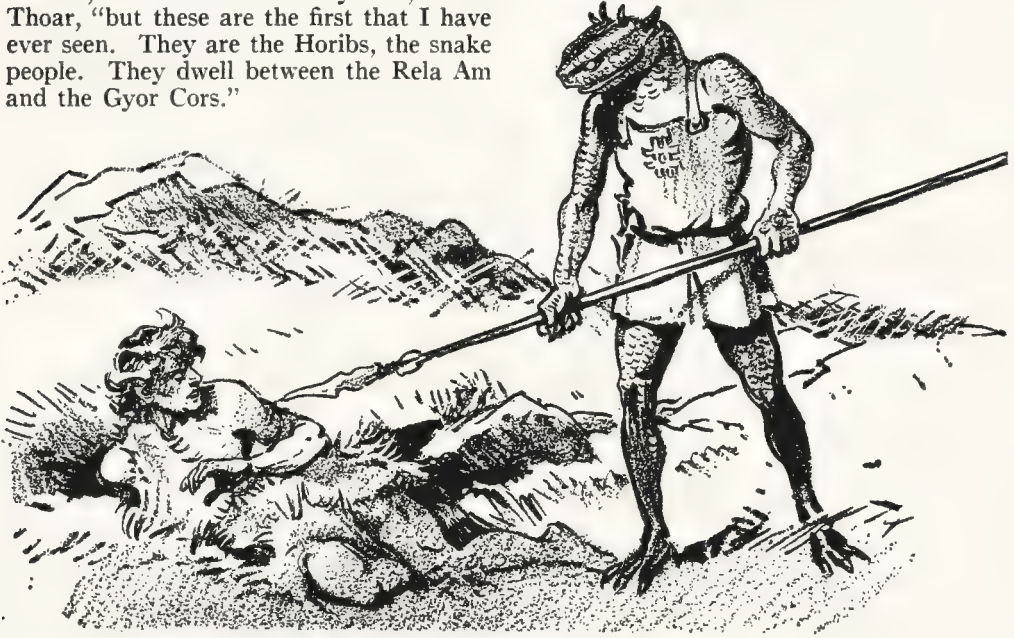
Lajo shook his head. "I do not know," he said.

"Doubtless to feed us to their women and children," said Thoar. "It is said that they keep their human prisoners and fatten them."

"You know what they are? You have seen them before?" Lajo asked Thoar.

"Yes, I know what they are," said Thoar, "but these are the first that I have ever seen. They are the Horibs, the snake people. They dwell between the Rela Am and the Gyor Cors."

fied by the insignia upon the breasts of their garments and the armlets which they wore, all tended toward establishing a suggestion of humanity that was at once grotesque and horrible, but when to these other attributes was added human speech the likeness to man created an impression that was indescribably repulsive.



"Make less noise," said the creature—and Jason realized that he must have been raving in his sleep.

AS Jason watched the Horibs at their grisly feast, he became suddenly conscious of a remarkable change that was taking place in their appearance. When he had first seen them, and all during the battle, they had been of a ghastly bluish color, the hands, feet and faces being several shades paler than the balance of the body, but as they settled down to their gory repast this hue gradually faded—to be replaced by a reddish tinge, which varied in intensity in different individuals, some of whom became almost crimson as the feast progressed.

If the appearance and bloodthirsty ferocity of the creatures appalled him, he was no less startled when he first heard them converse in the language of Pellucidar.

The general conformation of the creatures, their weapons, which consisted of long lances and stone knives, the apron-like apparel which they wore and the evident attempt at ornamentation as exempli-

So powerful was the fascination that the creatures aroused in the mind of Jason that he could divert neither his thoughts nor his eyes from them. He noticed that while the majority of them were about six feet in height, there were many much smaller, ranging downward to about four feet, while there was one tremendous individual that must have been fully nine feet tall; yet all were proportioned identically and the difference in height did not have the appearance of being at all related to a difference in age, except that the scales upon the largest of them were considerably thicker and coarser. Later, however, he was to learn that differences in size predicated differences in age, the growth of these creatures being governed by the same law which governs the growth of reptiles, which, unlike mammals, continue to grow throughout the entire duration of their lives.

When they had gorged themselves upon

the flesh of the Korsarians, the Horibs lay down, but whether to sleep or not Jason did not know—for their lidless eyes remained constantly staring. And now a new phenomenon occurred. Gradually the reddish tinge faded from their bodies, and was replaced by a brownish gray which harmonized with the ground upon which they lay.

EXHAUSTED by his long turn at the oars and by the horrors that he had witnessed, Jason gradually drifted off into deep slumber, which was troubled by hideous dreams in which he saw Jana in the clutches of a Horib. The creature was attempting to devour the Red Flower of Zoram, while Jason struggled with the bonds that secured him.

He was awakened by a sharp pain in his shoulder and opening his eyes he saw one of the homosaurians, as he had mentally dubbed them, standing over him, prodding him with the point of his sharp lance. "Make less noise," said the creature, and Jason realized that he must have been raving in his sleep.

The other Horibs were rising from the ground, voicing strange whistling hisses, and presently from the waters of the river and from the surrounding aisles of the gloomy forest their hideous mounts came trooping in answer to the summons.

"Stand up!" said the Horib who had awakened Jason. "I am going to remove your bonds," he continued. "You cannot escape. If you try to you will be killed. Follow me," he then commanded after he had removed the thongs which secured Jason's wrists.

Jason accompanied the creature into the midst of the herd of Pareiasauri that was milling about, snapping and hissing, along the shore of the river.

Although the Gorobors all looked alike to Jason, it was evident that the Horibs differentiated between individuals among them, for the one who was leading Jason threaded his way through the mass of slimy bodies until he reached the side of a particular individual.

"Get up," he said, motioning Jason to mount the creature. "Sit well forward on its neck."

It was with a sensation of the utmost disgust that Jason vaulted onto the back of the Gorobor. The feel of its cold, clammy, rough hide against his naked legs sent a chilly shudder up his spine. The reptileman mounted behind him, and presently

the entire company was on the march, each of the other prisoners being mounted in front of a Horib.

Into the gloomy forest the strange cavalcade marched, down dark, winding corridors overhung with dense vegetation, much of which was of a dead, pale cast, through lack of sunlight. A clammy chill, unusual in Pellucidar, pervaded the atmosphere and a feeling of depression weighed heavily upon all the prisoners.

"What are you going to do with us?" asked Jason after they had proceeded in silence for some distance.

"You will be fed upon eggs until you are fit to be eaten by the females and the little ones," replied the Horib. "They tire of fish and Gyor flesh. It is not often that we get as much gilak meat as we have just had."

Jason relapsed into silence, discovering that, as far as he was concerned, the Horib was conversationally a total loss and for long after the horror of the creature's reply weighed upon his mind. It was not that he feared death; it was the idea of being fattened for slaughter that was peculiarly abhorrent to him.

AS they rode between the never-ending trees he tried to speculate as to the origin of these gruesome creatures. It seemed to him that they might constitute a supreme effort upon the part of Nature to reach a higher goal by a less devious route than that which evolution had pursued upon the outer crust from the age of reptiles upward to the age of man.

During the march Jason caught occasional glimpses of Thoar and the other prisoners, though he had no opportunity to exchange words with them, and after what seemed an interminable period of time the cavalcade emerged from the forest into the sunlight and Jason saw in the distance the shimmering blue waters of an inland lake. As they approached its shores he discerned throngs of Horibs, some swimming or lolling in the waters of the lake, while others lay or squatted upon the muddy bank. As the company arrived among them they showed only a cold, reptilian interest in the returning warriors, though some of the females and young evinced a suggestive interest in the prisoners.

The adult females differed but slightly from the males. Aside from the fact that they were hornless and went naked, Jason could discover no other distinguishing feature. He saw no signs of a village, nor any



The warrior in charge of Thoar suddenly clapped his hand over the prisoner's mouth and dived headforemost into the waters of the lake.

indication of arts or crafts other than those necessary to produce their crude weapons and the simple apron-like armor that the warriors wore to protect the soft skin of their bellies.

The prisoners were now dragged from their mounts and herded together by several of the warriors, who conducted them along the edge of the lake toward a slightly higher bank.

ON the way they passed a number of the slender stakes driven into the ground by the females to mark the spot where eggs had been laid. All along the shore at this point were hundreds of such stakes, and farther on Jason saw several tiny Horibs, evidently but just hatched, wriggling upward out of the mud. No one paid the slightest attention to them as they stumbled and reeled about trying to accustom themselves to the use of their limbs, upon all four of which they went at first, like tiny, grotesque lizards.

Arrived at the higher bank, the warrior in charge of Thoar, who was in the lead, suddenly clapped his hand over the prisoner's mouth, pinching Thoar's nose tightly between his thumb and first finger and, without other preliminaries, dived head foremost into the waters of the lake, carrying his victim with him.

Jason was horrified as he saw his friend and companion disappear beneath the muddy waters, which, after a moment of

violent agitation, settled down again, leaving only an ever-widening circular ripple to mark the spot where the two had disappeared. An instant later another Horib dived in with Lajo and in rapid succession the other two Korsarians shared a similar fate.

With a superhuman effort Jason sought to tear himself free from the clutches of his captor, but the cold, clammy hands held him tightly. One of them was suddenly clapped over his mouth and nose and an instant later he felt the warm waters of the lake close about him.

Still struggling to free himself, he was conscious that the Horib was carrying him swiftly beneath the surface. Presently he felt slimy mud beneath him, along which his body was being dragged. His lungs cried out in tortured agony for air; his senses reeled and momentarily all went black before him, though no blacker than the Stygian darkness of the hole into which he was being dragged; then the hand was removed from his mouth and nose; mechanically his lungs gasped for air, and as consciousness slowly returned, Jason realized that he was not drowned but that he was lying upon a bed of mud, inhaling air and not water.

Total darkness surrounded him; he felt a clammy body scrape against his, and then another and another. There was a sound of splashing, gurgling water and then silence—a silence as of the tomb.

CHAPTER XIX

PRISONERS

STANDING upon the edge of the great Gyor plains surrounded by armed creatures, who had but just demonstrated their ability to destroy one of the most powerful and ferocious creatures that evolution has ever succeeded in producing, Tarzan of the Apes was yet loath to lay down his weapons as he had been instructed and surrender, without resistance, to an unknown fate.

"What do you intend to do with us?" he demanded of the Horib who had ordered him to lay down his weapons.

"We shall take you to our village where you will be well fed," replied the creature. "You cannot escape us; no one escapes the Horibs."

The ape-man hesitated. The Red Flower of Zoram moved closer to his side. "Let us go with them," she whispered. "We cannot escape them now; there are too many of them. Possibly if we go with them we shall find an opportunity later."

Tarzan nodded and then he turned to the Horib. "We are ready," he said.

Mounted upon the necks of Gorobors, each in front of a Horib warrior, they were carried across a corner of the Gyor Cors to the same gloomy forest through which Jason and Thoar had been taken, though they entered it from a different direction.

RISING at the east end of the Mountains of the Thipdars, a river flows in a general southeasterly direction, entering the gloomy forest of the Horibs, through which it runs down to the Rela Am, or River of Darkness. It was near the confluence of these two rivers that the Korsarians had been attacked by the Horibs and it was along the upper reaches of the same river that Tarzan and Jana were being conducted downstream toward the village of the lizard-men.

The lake of the Horibs lies at a considerable distance from the eastern end of the Mountains of the Thipdars, perhaps five hundred miles, and where there is no time and distances are measured by food and sleep it makes little difference whether places are separated by five miles or five hundred. One man might travel a thousand miles without mishap, while another, in attempting to go one mile, might be killed, in which event the one mile would be much farther than the thousand miles, for, in fact, it would have proved an interminable

distance to him who had essayed it in this instance. . . .

As Tarzan and Jana rode through the dismal forest, hundreds of miles away Jason Gridley drew himself to a sitting position in such utter darkness that he could almost feel it. "God!" he exclaimed.

"Who spoke?" asked a voice out of the darkness, and Jason recognized the voice as Thoar's.

"It is I, Jason," replied Gridley.

"Where are we?" demanded another voice. It was Lajo.

"It is dark. I wish they had killed us," said a fourth voice.

"Don't worry," said a fifth, "we shall be killed soon enough."

"We are all here," said Jason. "I thought we were all done for when I saw them drag you into the water one by one."

"Where are we?" demanded one of the Korsarians. "What sort of a hole is this into which they have put us?"

"In the world from which I come," said Jason, "there are huge reptiles, called crocodiles, who build such nests or retreats in the banks of rivers, just above the water line, but the only entrance leads down below the waters of the river. It is probably such a hole as that into which we have been dragged."

"Why can't we swim out again?" asked Thoar.

"Perhaps we could," replied Jason, "but they would see us and bring us back again."

"Are we going to lie here in the mud and wait to be slaughtered?" demanded Lajo.

"No," said Jason; "but let us work out a reasonable plan of escape. It will gain us nothing to act rashly."

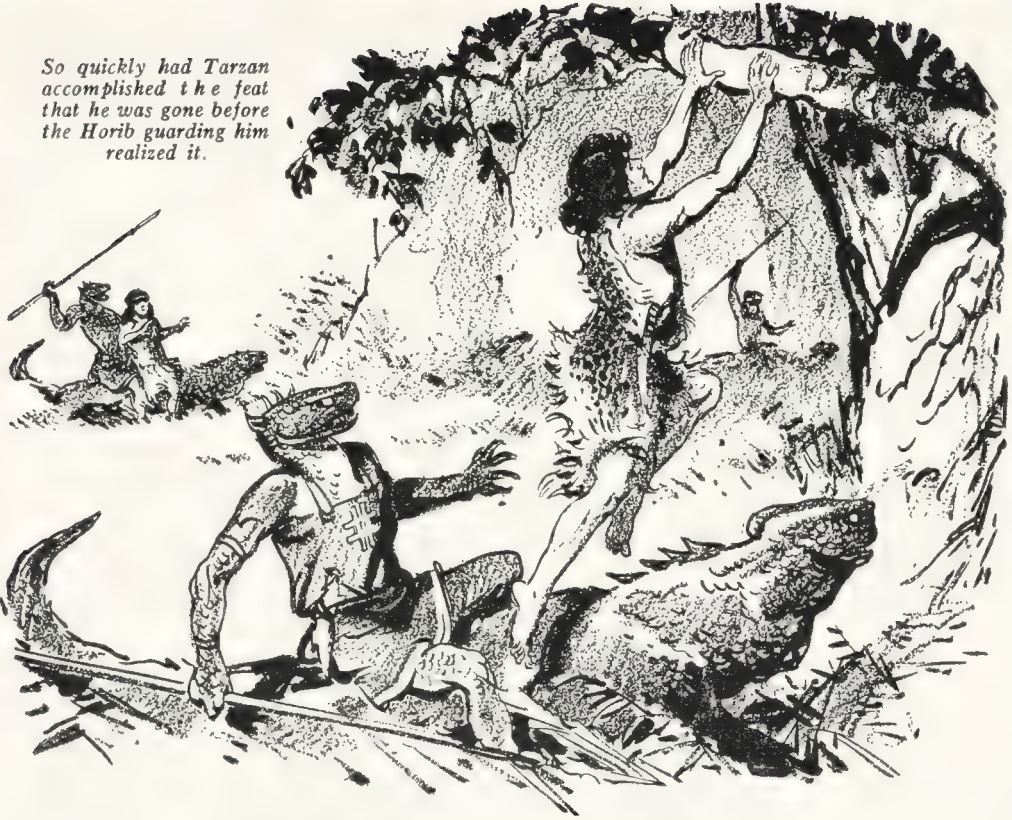
FOR some time the men sat in silence, which was finally broken by the American. "Do you think we are alone here?" he asked in a low tone. "I have listened carefully, but I have heard no sound other than our own breathing."

"Nor I," said Thoar.

"Come closer then," said Jason, and the five men groped through the darkness and arranged themselves in a circle, where they squatted leaning forward till their heads touched. "I have a plan," continued Jason. "When they were bringing us here I noticed the forest grew close to the lake at this point. If we can make a tunnel into the forest, we may be able to escape."

"Which way is the forest?" asked Lajo.

So quickly had Tarzan accomplished the feat that he was gone before the Horib guarding him realized it.



"That is something that we can only guess at," replied Jason. "We may guess wrong, but we must take the chance. But I think that it is reasonable to assume that the direction of the forest is directly opposite the entrance through which we were carried into this hole."

"Let us start digging at once," exclaimed one of the Korsarians.

"Wait until I locate the entrance," said Thoar.

He crawled away upon his hands and knees, groping through the darkness and the mud. Presently he announced that he had found the opening, and from the direction of his voice the others knew where to start digging.

All were filled with enthusiasm, for success seemed almost within the range of possibility, but now they were confronted with the problem of the disposal of the dirt which they excavated from their tunnel. Jason instructed Lajo to remain at the point where they intended excavating and then had the others crawl in different directions in an effort to estimate the size of the chamber in which they were confined. Each man was to crawl in a straight line in the direction assigned him and count the number of times that his knees touched the

ground before he came to the end of the cavern.

By this means they discovered that the cave was long and narrow and, if they were correct in the direction they had assumed, it ran parallel to the lake shore. For twenty feet it extended in one direction and for over fifty in the other.

It was finally decided that they should distribute the earth equally over the floor of the chamber for awhile and then carry it to the farther end, piling it against the farther wall uniformly so as not to attract unnecessary attention in the event that any of the Horibs visited them.

Digging with their fingers was slow and laborious work, but they kept steadily at it, taking turns about. The man at work would push the dirt behind him and the others would gather it up and distribute it, so that at no time was there a fresh pile of earth upon the ground to attract attention should a Horib come. And Horibs did come—they brought food; but the men could hear the splash of their bodies in the water as they dived into the lake to reach the tunnel leading to the cave and being thus warned they grouped themselves in front of the entrance to their tunnel, effec-

tually hiding it from view. The Horibs who came into the chamber at no time gave any suggestion of suspicion that all was not right. While it was apparent that they could see in the dark it was also quite evident that they could not discern things clearly and thus the greatest fear that their plot might be discovered was at least partially removed.

After considerable effort they had succeeded in excavating a tunnel some three feet in diameter and about ten feet long when Jason, who was excavating at the time, unearthed a large shell, which greatly facilitated the process of excavation. From then on their advance was more rapid, yet it seemed to them all that it was an endless job; nor was there any telling at what moment the Horibs would come to take them for the feast.

It was Jason's wish to get well within the forest before turning their course upward toward the surface, but to be certain of this he knew that they must first encounter roots of trees and pass beyond them, which might necessitate a detour and delay; yet to come up prematurely would be to nullify all that they had accomplished so far and to put a definite end to all hope of escape.

CHAPTER XX

TARZAN FINDS THE WAZIRI

AND while the five men dug beneath the ground in the dark hole that was stretching slowly out beneath the dismal forest of the Horibs a great ship rode majestically high in air above the northern slopes of the Mountains of the Thipdars.

"They never passed this way," said Zuppner. "Nothing short of a mountain goat could cross this range."

"I quite agree with you, sir," said Hines. "We might as well search in some other direction now."

"God!" exclaimed Zuppner. "If I only knew in what direction to search!"

Hines shook his head. "One direction is as good as another, sir," he said.

"I suppose so," said Zuppner, and, obeying his light touch upon the helm, the nose of the great dirigible swung to port. Following an easterly course, she paralleled the Mountains of the Thipdars and sailed out over the Gyor Cors. A slight turn of the wheel would have carried her to the southeast, across the dismal forest through

whose gloomy corridors Tarzan and Jana were being borne to a horrible fate. But Captain Zuppner did not know and so the *O-220* continued on toward the east, while the Lord of the Jungle and the Red Flower of Zoram rode silently toward their doom.

FROM almost the moment that they had entered the forest Tarzan had known that he might escape. It would have been the work of but an instant to have leaped from the back of the Gorobor upon which he was riding to one of the lower branches of the forest, some of which barely grazed their heads as they passed beneath, and once in the trees he knew that no Horib nor any Gorobor could catch him; but he could not desert Jana—nor could he acquaint her with his plans, for they were never sufficiently close together for him to whisper to her unheard by the Horibs. But even had he been able to tell her, he doubted her ability to reach the safety of the trees before the Horibs recaptured her.

If he could but get near enough to take hold of her, he was confident that he could effect a safe escape for both of them; and so he rode on in silence, hoping against hope that the opportunity he so desired would eventually develop.

They had reached the upper end of the lake and were skirting its western shore and, from remarks dropped by the Horibs in their conversation, which were far from numerous, the ape-man guessed that they were almost at their destination, and still escape seemed as remote as ever.

Chafing with impatience, Tarzan was on the point of making a sudden break for liberty, trusting that the unexpectedness of his act would confuse the lizard-men for just the few seconds that would be necessary for him to throw Jana to his shoulder and swing to the lower terrace that beckoned invitingly from above.

THE nerves and muscles of Tarzan of the Apes are trained to absolute obedience to his will; they are never surprised into any revelation of emotion, nor are they often permitted to reveal what is passing in the mind of the ape-man when he is in the presence of strangers or enemies, but now, for once, they were almost shocked into revealing the astonishment that filled him as a vagrant breeze carried to his nostrils a scent-spoor that he had never thought to know again.

The Horibs were moving almost directly



"Shoot to kill!" He had scarcely ceased speaking when the first of the Horibs rode into view.

up-wind—so Tarzan knew that the authors of the familiar odors which he had sensed were somewhere ahead of them. He thought quickly now, but not without weighing carefully the plan that had leaped to his mind the instant that that familiar scent-spoor had impinged upon his nostrils. His major consideration was for the safety of the girl, but in order to rescue her he must protect himself. He felt that it would be impossible for them both to escape simultaneously, but there was another way now—a way which seemed to offer excellent possibilities for success. Behind him, upon the Gorobor, and so close that their bodies touched, sat a huge Horib. In one hand he carried a lance, but the other hand was free. Tarzan must move so quickly that the fellow could not touch him with his free hand before he was out of reach. To do this would require agility of an almost superhuman nature, but there were few creatures who could compare in this respect with the ape-man. Low above them swung the branches of the dismal forest; Tarzan tensely awaited his opportunity.

Presently he saw it—a sturdy branch with ample head-room above it—a doorway in the ceiling of somber foliage. He leaned forward, his hands resting lightly upon the neck of the Gorobor. They were almost

beneath the branch he had selected when he sprang lightly to his feet and almost in the same movement sprang upward into the tree. So quickly had he accomplished the feat that he was gone before the Horib that had been guarding him realized it. When he did it was too late—the prisoner had gone. With others, who had seen the escape, he raised a cry of warning to those ahead, but neither by sight nor sound could they locate the fugitive, for Tarzan traveled through the upper terrace and the foliage beneath hid him from their eyes.

JANA, who had been riding a little in the rear of Tarzan, saw his escape and her heart sank, for in the presence of the Horibs the Red Flower of Zoram had come as near to experiencing fear as she ever had in her life. She had derived a certain sense of comfort from the presence of Tarzan and now that he was gone she felt very much alone. She did not blame him for escaping when he had the opportunity, but she was sure in her own heart that Jason would not thus have deserted her.

Following the scent-spoor that was his only guide, Tarzan of the Apes moved rapidly through the trees. At first he climbed high to the upper terraces and here he found a new world—a world of sunlight

and luxuriant foliage, peopled by strange birds of gorgeous plumage which darted swiftly hither and thither. There were flying reptiles, too, and great gaudy moths. Snakes coiled upon many a branch and because they were of varieties unknown to him, he did not know whether they constituted a real menace or not. It was at once a beautiful and a repulsive world, but the feature of it which attracted him most was its silence, for its denizens seemed to be voiceless. The presence of the snakes and the dense foliage rendered it an unsatisfactory world for one who wished to travel swiftly and so the ape-man dropped to a lower level, and here he found the forest more open and the scent-spoor clearer in his nostrils.

Not once had he doubted the origin of that scent, although it seemed unbelievable that he should discover it here in this gloomy wood in vast Pellucidar.

He was moving very rapidly for he wished, if possible, to reach his destination ahead of the Horibs. He hoped that his escape might delay the lizard-men, and this was in fact the case, for they had halted immediately while a number of them had climbed into the trees searching for Tarzan. There was little in their almost expressionless faces to denote their anger, but the sickly bluish cast which overspread their scales denoted their mounting rage at the ease with which this gilak prisoner had escaped them, and when, finally, thwarted in their search, they resumed their interrupted march they were in a particularly ugly mood.

Far ahead of them now Tarzan of the Apes dropped to the lower terraces. Strong in his nostrils was the scent-spoor he had been following, telling him in a language more dependable than words that he had but little farther to go to find those he sought, and a moment later he dropped down into one of the gloomy aisles of the forest, dropping as from heaven into the astonished view of ten stalwart warriors.

FOR an instant they stood looking at him in wide-eyed amazement and then they ran forward and threw themselves upon their knees about him, kissing his hands as they shed tears of happiness. "Oh, Bwana, Bwana," they cried; "it is indeed you! Mulungu has been good to his children; he

has given their Big Bwana back to them alive."

"And now I have work for you, my children," said Tarzan; "the snake people are coming and with them is a girl whom they had captured. I thank God that you are armed with rifles and I hope that you have plenty of ammunition."

"We have saved it, Bwana, using our spears and our arrows whenever we could."

"Good," said Tarzan; "we shall need it now. How far are we from the ship?"

MUVIRO shook his head sadly. "I do not know," he said.

"You do not know?" repeated Tarzan.

"No, Bwana, we are lost. We have been lost for a long while," replied the chief of the Waziri.

"What were you doing away from the ship alone?" demanded Tarzan.

"We were sent out with Gridley and Von Horst to search for you, Bwana."

"Where are they?" asked Tarzan.

"A long time ago, I do not know how long, we became separated from Gridley and never saw him again. At that time it was savage beasts that separated us, but how Von Horst became separated from us we do not know. We had found a cave and had gone into it to sleep; when we awoke Von Horst was gone; we never saw him again."

"They are coming!" warned Tarzan.

"I hear them, Bwana," replied Muviro.

"Have you seen them—the snake people?" asked Tarzan.

"No, Bwana, we have seen no people for a long time; only beasts—terrible beasts."

"You are going to see some terrible men now," Tarzan warned them; "but do not be frightened by their appearance. Your bullets will bring them down."

"When, Bwana, have you seen a Waziri frightened?" asked Muviro proudly.

The ape-man smiled. "One of you let me take his rifle," he said, "and then spread out through the forest. I do not know exactly where they will pass, but the moment that any of you makes contact with them commence shooting and shoot to kill, remembering, however, that the girl rides in front of one of them. Be careful that you do not harm her."

He had scarcely ceased speaking when the first of the Horibs rode into view.

"That feller run like a deer when we surrounded him. . . . I put a bullet in that smuggler's leg—an' down he went!"



"I aint begun to fight!" declared the man who was to become Number One surfman. And then he started in!

The Coast Guardsman

By W. E. CARLETON

Illustrated by William Molt

"HELL'S bells! You—thutty year old, an' five of it in the service, an' you aint discovered yit that the coast guard aint a substitute for the old ladies' home! Devil of a prospec' I've got—Jansen transferred to Sandy Holler station, an' you in line to step into his shoes. You to be Number One surfman!"

"But, Cap'n Cole—" protested the fair-haired, sun-bronzed young Number Two surfman, squaring his sturdy shoulders.

"If the rum-runners o' Cape Cod hear you've replaced Jansen," the commander of Santuck station cut in, "they'll declare a half holiday to celebrate. The story o' the latest *Seabright* affair night 'fore last will likely go the length an' breadth o' the Cape, if it don't go further."

"You don't need to remind me o' *that*," Aubrey Sears, Number Two surfman, diligently polished the brasswork of the beach-cart, and the keen black eyes of Cap Cole roved through the apparatus shed—looking for something else to find fault with, Aubrey presumed. "But sometimes, Cap'n, things aint always what they seem—" specially on a dark night on Salt Marsh."

"Aint what they seem? What d'yuh mean by that?"

"Jist that. All I've got to say is it's a pity you didn't see with yer own eyes what really happened, an' not have to take Jansen's word for it."

Cap Cole's heavy black mustache and shaggy eyebrows were scarcely darker than the thundercloud which passed over his square face. Menacingly he hunched his massive shoulders forward.

"You tryin' to make me out a liar?" he roared.

"No—if I was, I'd tell you point-blank, Cap'n," Sears clarified his position in the matter. "But I *do* accuse Jansen o' lyin', though I know it wont do me no good. When that smuggler from the *Seabright* run acrost the marsh towards me—"

"You let him keep on runnin'—an' he'd be runnin' yit if Jansen hadn't put a bullet in his leg," finished the Captain. "An' I don't want for you to call my Number One surfman a liar in my presence, Sears. He's rankin' above you, an' I'll take his word as final until I'm shown proof that'll change my opinion. When you git through

with that job on the beach-cart," he shifted the subject, "go up in the tower an' touch up the brasswork there." The Santuck commander turned on his heel and stalked out of the apparatus shed.

SEARS sighed resignedly, and energetically applied a soft strip of flannel to the shining metal of the beach-cart. Cap's April-morning tirade was only a repetition of the mild abuse to which he had subjected the young surfman of late. It was beginning to keep the conscientious Aubrey awake nights, preying on his mind during precious hours when he should be resting for patrol duty on desolate Santuck beach, or getting in a wink of sleep after such a patrol in preparation for the next day's work. And the duties of a member of the Santuck crew were strenuous the year round, for that strip of coast had come to be the rendezvous of the various specialists in smuggling who were operating extensively on Cape Cod.

The independent Yankee blood of Aubrey Sears had reached the boiling point, but it hadn't boiled over—yet. Before he met Mamie Weston two years ago, he would have kicked over the traces, told Cap Cole where he could get off, and consigned Santuck and its highly efficient crew to Davy Jones. He was able-bodied, big-boned, hard as nails, and although the coast-guard job was the only line of work he was familiar with, he could find employment inland—something less to his liking, but productive of sufficient funds to support him. Time and again he was tempted to inform Cap that he was through.

But his reward at Santuck for taking Cap's abuse unwhimperingly would quite probably be the Number One surfman's job. He was in direct line for promotion, and under his skin Cap wasn't half so savage as he appeared to be on the surface, for he had always recommended his crew for promotion without fear or favor according to seniority in the service. The trouble in the *Seabright* affair was that Cap believed Jansen because of the latter's rating above Aubrey. Cap's discipline was maintained by his backing the Number One surfman in all matters.

On the assumption that he would be thus promoted, Aubrey and Mamie had planned to marry. She was a pretty, light-brown-haired and blue-eyed beam of irresponsible human sunshine who lived with her widowed mother in Howesport village.

On one side of the mantel of the cottage parlor where Aubrey and she could usually be found when he was off duty, hung a portrait of George Washington; balancing it on the opposite side was suspended one of Aubrey in his uniform.

Members of the Santuck crew were always welcome at the Widow Weston's, for her husband had been keeper of Santuck station in the days when it was a unit of the life-saving service. He had died a hero at the wreck of the *David Rothwell*—one of the unsung martyrs of the grand old crews of Cape Cod life-savers who have died in vain attempts to rescue their shipwrecked fellow-men.

But during the past few weeks Jansen had rather overstepped the conventions of that hospitality by spending the greater part of his time off duty at the widow's. Well enough Aubrey knew the nature of the attraction. But Mamie had declared to Aubrey that she detested the surfman Jansen. And Aubrey, putting his trust in that honest-eyed, straightforward new convert to flapperism who had promised to marry him, banished his jealousy. After one of Jansen's calls at the widow's, however, Aubrey always glanced at his portrait on the parlor wall to make sure it was still there. He had a suspicion that Jansen had a way with women.

THAT night Aubrey donned his best clothes, slipped his automatic pistol into his hip pocket—a precaution Santuck men always took because of numerous threats they received anonymously from the smuggling gentry—and trudged over the sandy road to Howesport village, two miles away. He had swapped his day off with surfman Paty—but not the night, for Mamie would be expecting him.

She was. She ushered him into the parlor as usual, and took a seat beside him on the sofa. But she didn't seem like her ordinarily gay and unburdened self. Aubrey couldn't remember ever having noticed that she was worried before.

"What's the matter, Mamie?" he asked.

Mamie did not answer immediately. Then: "Did you see today's Boston paper, Aubrey?"

"No! What's in it?" But he already suspected.

And his suspicions were correct. Mamie showed it to him—the account of how the outlaw schooner *Seabright* had slipped past the cordon of coast-guard cutters off

the back side of Cape Cod again—how the Santuck crew had been called out by Surfman Hubbard, who sighted the vessel on his patrol to the halfway house between Santuck and Sandy Hollow stations. How the crew had pounced on the landing-party from the schooner and captured the smuggled cargo of whisky brought ashore in the speedboat from the *Seabright*, scared off a shore party that had come from an automobile evidently to receive the contraband beverage, and cut off one of the landing-party before he could escape with his shipmates in the speedboat.

But after finishing that part of the narrative, Aubrey's gray eyes fairly shot sparks, his coppery complexion darkened, and the newspaper shook in his strong calloused fingers.

"All the rest o' that's a lie!" he declared in a husky voice. "That feller run like a deer when we surrounded him—run straight for me. I run to meet him, an' he up an' veered off the other direction. Jansen was standin' plumb in front o' him. But when Jansen seen him bearin' down on him, he let out a screech an' turned an' run. Run away from him—I swear to God! An' when I seen that, I put a bullet in the smuggler's leg—an' down he went, moanin'."

"But where was Cap Cole an' the other Santuck boys all that time?" queried Mamie.

"Comin' up from the shore—closin' in on the smuggler. We was in a wide circle—"

"But didn't Cap see it—see who done the shootin'?"

AUBREY sniffed contemptuously. "See it? Huh—if Jansen hadn't knowed Cap couldn't see it, he wouldn't lied like he did. 'Twas dark as a pocket on Salt Marsh. If Jansen hadn't been so close to me, I wouldn't 'a' reco'nized *him* until he let out that screech when the smuggler put for him. But when that smuggler went down with my bullet in his leg! Lord, *then* Jansen was Johnny-on-the-spot. He was bendin' over that smuggler an' holdin' down his arms before the rest o' the crew come up. An' 'twas then he told Cap his story—jist like it's printed in that damn' newspaper—taken, likely, from the report Cap sent to the superintendent."

He crushed the paper in his powerful hands and hurled it to the floor.

MAMIE laid a soothing little hand on his cheek and looked pityingly into his angry eyes.

"I know how you must feel, Aubrey dear," she sympathized. "An' I believe you—ev'ry word. Jansen *is* mean—I can see that in his eyes when he comes here. The worst of it is, it makes you out to be a coward. An' I know you'd never be a coward, Aubrey."

"Jansen'll pay for this!" stormed Aubrey. "I wish I hadn't been so meek for discipline's sake when he told that lie to Cap. I should 'a' made him swaller it right there on Salt Marsh. But I'll do it tonight—discipline be damned! He'll take back ev'ry word, even if I'm kicked out o' the service for beatin' him up!"

"And then when would we be married?" plaintively asked Mamie. "What would become of your record in the service? Thrown away! Even if Cap should be mean enough to hold you back from promotion now, another opportunity'll come up where you can make a better name for yourself, one that Jansen can't damage with his lies. An' accordin' to all accounts, they's an opportunity here right now."

Aubrey looked at her inquiringly. "What d'yuh mean, opportunity?" he asked.

"Amos Swift was in yesterday afternoon. He claims they's smugglin' goin' on in Howesport harbor, right in front o' his house."

"Pshaw! I don't b'lieve it!" Aubrey ridiculed the idea. "It aint likely smugglers'd be so bold. Amos an' Cap Cole have been at swords'-points for years. I wouldn't put it past Amos to start a story like that to make out that Cap's asleep on his job."

"Cap *is*!" declared Mamie. "None of the Santuck men ever patrol Howesport harbor now'days. When Father was in command at the station, he had it patrolled jist like the main beach."

"Yeah—but times have changed since then," Aubrey defended his superior. "That Howesport harbor patrol took us two miles out o' the reg'lar patrol—we hated it. That's *one* service Jansen done at the station. He convinced Cap 'twas a waste o' time, an' Cap agreed with him. The result was we got orders from the superintendent not to include Howesport harbor in our post."

"Then no wonder the smugglers are takin' advantage of it!" retorted Mamie. "Amos says you can see 'em there any

foggy night like tonight. He thinks they're from the *Seabright*."

"Why doesn't Amos report it, then?" Aubrey asked indignantly. "If not to Cap, to one o' the rest of us."

"Aubrey, do you s'pose Amos wants trouble? Those smugglers might murder him an' Emma, livin' apart from the village like they do. You mustn't even mention that I told you this, Aubrey, because Amos has left it with you to do somethin' about it yourself without lettin' Cap into it. He knows how Cap holds you down. It's a chance for you, Aubrey, to capture those smugglers an' get full credit for it yourself without Cap dictatin' to you. Don't you see?"

AUBREY "saw." But not a chance to make a hero of himself. If those men Amos had reported were real smugglers, there was a possibility that Cap had a special reason for urging the discontinuance of the Howesport harbor patrol. Though Cap appeared to be the soul of honor, one never could tell.

If Aubrey should interfere with such an enterprise in which Cap was directly concerned, a fine chance he would have of winning promotion, dependingly largely, as he was, on Cap's recommendation! Then too, he knew the crew of the *Seabright* were about as hard a bunch of cut-throats as the Lord ever put breath into. Jansen's flight on Salt Marsh from one of them had been discreet if not valiant.

"It's foggy tonight," Mamie reminded him. "There couldn't be a better night to jump on them. An' after that piece in the Boston paper, Aubrey—"

"Amos an' Emma are nervous," he protested. "Livin' alone like they do apart from the village, they prob'ly imagine—"

"They *don't* imagine!" Mamie vigorously stamped her small foot. "The least you can do is to investigate. Are you—afraid, Aubrey?"

"Afraid? Course I aint afraid! If old Amos wants me to soothe his nerves by goin' down there an' lookin' the ground over, I can do *that* much to pacify him. I'll walk back to the station that way after I leave here, an'—"

"Let's not wait till then, Aubrey," Mamie pleaded. "Let's go *now*!"

Aubrey looked at her through narrowed eyes. "You aint in on this, Mamie," he declared. "You'll stay right here. If Amos *shouldn't* be misrepresentin' it, an'

they turned out to be real smugglers from the *Seabright*, it'd be no place for you when they ketch me spyin' on 'em."

"I *am* goin'! I'll go to Amos' an' call on Emma. You can escort me there, then go down to the landin' below the house. We'll watch from the upstairs window an' telephone the station if you need help. Only I hope you wont need it, Aubrey. I hope you can do it all yourself so's Cap an' Jansen wont come into it."

"A lot you'll see from the upstairs winder, a thick night like this," scoffed Aubrey. "But if you'd rather go prowlin' round Howesport harbor than entertain me my night off—"

"Aubrey, you know better'n that!" she rebuked him. "I'm doin' all this because—well, I'm sort of ashamed of that piece in the paper. An' I want you to show ev'ryone in Howesport that you aint a coward an' never was one."

"Well, then come on!" Aubrey consented. Mamie ran upstairs, told her mother she was going to Emma's, put on her wraps, and with Aubrey went out into the night.

THROUGH the fog they walked down the sandy road to the harbor, talking in half-whispers, Mamie hurrying three steps to his one to keep up with him. The village clock dolefully tolled eight, its distant tones sounding more funereal than ever in the leaden atmosphere.

They branched off at the side road to the two-story Swift homestead set on a wooded hill overlooking Swift's Landing on the sheltered little beach below. A light burned downstairs in the parlor.

"Wait here till I'm inside," whispered Mamie, reassuringly squeezing his hand. "Then go to the landin'. If you need help, Aubrey, shout. We'll be listenin', an' we'll telephone the station if you holler. Amos'll come down to help you while the crew's gittin' here."

Aubrey laughed under his breath. Amos! A lot of help that timid old man would be! Aubrey waited until the door of the ark on the hill opened and closed, then descended the path to the landing.

Tiny waves lapped the fog-shrouded beach. Across the narrow strip of water—not much wider than Salt Marsh Creek at high tide—two unoccupied summer cottages bulked in the fog. To their right twinkled the kitchen light of Reuben Nickerson's farmhouse, and a restless cow mooed in the stable behind it. A fine



Aubrey's gray eyes fairly shot sparks. "All the rest o' that's a lie!" he declared in a husky voice.

place for smugglers to operate! Why, they'd be just as likely to run their contraband ashore directly in front of Santuck station, under the very noses of the crack crew of Cape Cod!

Lord—if the boys at the station ever learned that he'd snooped around looking for smugglers at Swift's Landing, he'd never hear the last of it! It would be a standing joke at the station.

Aubrey withdrew from the beach to the stunted pines of the upland, and seated himself on an overturned dory. Far down the harbor mouth the fog whistle of Narrow Point lighthouse groaned intermittently. There was a chill in the air—a damper, clammy cold than he experienced in his patrols on the wider, more exposed stretches of Santuck beach.

The drone of the fog whistle and the continual *lap-lap* of the waves lulled him until he was half asleep. The village clock struck ten. Somewhere out on the Atlantic outside Howesport harbor a motorboat chugged. One of the coast-guard flotilla, most likely, combing the waters inside the three-mile limit for the elusive *Seabright*.

Suddenly he arose from his seat and strained his eyes at the landing. Out of the thickness loomed the bow of a dory. And astern of that dory rode another. Two men in each, one rowing, the other standing in the stern. And the oars of those dories were muffled!

Aubrey withdrew deeper into the stunted pines—just in time, for a flashlight from the leading dory played on the beach, and a deep voice, slightly hushed, sang out: "All right—straight ahead!"

The prow of the first dory scraped on the shore; then the second dory came to rest on the sand beside it. The occupants of both boats stepped into the water, and their sea-boots splashed as the dories were drawn up higher.

"Hand us a crate, thar, Russ!" the deep voice called out. "We've got a few more lobsters here 'n you have, I cal'late."

A big arm shot up from a huge lumbering body, and with a thud a hand proportionately large snatched a flying crate out of the air. Carefully he and his smaller companion filled it with lobsters from the bottom of the dory, while the smaller men of the other dory lugged several lobster-laden crates ashore.

"I might 'a' known 'twould turn out like this!" the watching Aubrey grumbled to himself. For Amos' "smugglers" were old Nathan Holway and his three sons, harmless, industrious lobstermen who minded their own business—which was more than Amos could say of himself. And to put Aubrey in an even more ludicrous light if his presence there were detected, they were cousins of Jansen.

The young surfman took a step back, to put more pines between himself and the beach. But in doing so he stepped on an

empty bottle, and it burst with a loud tinkle under his boots.

"What the hell was that?" exclaimed Nathan, and the flashlight's ray penetrated the pines in which Aubrey was concealed.

"Thar he is—some one hidin' in them pines!" the nasal tenor of Russ Holway rang out. "Come out o' that thicket, you! We see yuh!"

"I'll be damned!" shouted his brother Enoch. "It's Aubrey Sears!"

Recognized, Aubrey stepped out of his hiding-place and walked boldly down to the landing. "Good ev'nin'," he saluted the lobstermen. "Kinder thick, aint it?"

"What're ye doin', snoopin' round an' spyin' on us?" belligerently roared old Nathan. "Can't honest folks 'arn a livin' 'thout some damned coast-guard comin' two miles off'n his post to peek at us?"

"P'raps he's lookin' for that feller he run away from on Salt Marsh," suggested Enoch, and his two brothers snickered.

THAT made Aubrey's fighting blood heat up. "No matter why I'm here," he defied them, resolved to maintain his dignity even though he felt like a fool. And he seized upon the salient feature of their landing: "You might tell me why you was rowin' with muffled oars."

"Hear the brave bully boy o' Santuck!" derided Russ. "He's puttin' us under cross-examination. I don't know as it's any o' his business why—"

"Shut up!" Nathan silenced his smart-aleck son. "This spotter's a low-down, cowardly whelp, but he's a officer o' the Fed'ral Gover'mint, an' must be treated with respect for the uniform he wears if nawthin' else, even if he aint wearin' it now," he added suggestively. "The reason we muffled our oars, Mr. Coast Guard," he explained with mock courtesy, "is that we didn't want to distarb Amos Swift an' Emma, bein's how we was kep' out later'n usual by a strong tide after we'd hauled our lobster pots."

"Does that satisfy ye?" asked Fred, the youngest brother, nastily. "If it don't—"

"Close yer damned trap!" bellowed Nathan. And he turned again to Aubrey. "Some day ye'll git yer fool head busted, nosin' round whar ye've no call to be prowlin'," he warned. "I'm goin' to see Cap Cole 'bout this!"

"An' seein's how you're wearin' no uniform," invited Russ, "I'd like to take ye on for a little go right here, now, bare

knuckles. I'd like nawthin' better'n to fix ye up so's ye wouldn't have no ambition to bother any more honest fishermen or runaway smugglers."

Aubrey slipped out of his overcoat and the jacket of his best gray suit, and threw them on the beach. "I'll accommodate ye, Russ Holway!" he shouted, assuming a defensive fighting attitude in which he had acquired a little skill by boxing with Surfman Paty for recreation during leisure moments at the station. "Come on!" he accepted the fisherman's challenge.

But Nathan stepped between them. "They'll be no fist-fightin' here!" he declared. "Not but what you can lick him, Russ, but I don't trust skulkin' coast guards that are licensed to carry firearms, specially if they're gittin' the wust of it. Now, little coast-guard boy," he taunted Aubrey, "run along back to the station. It's late, an' me an' my boys want to git a night's rest 'fore termorrer."

"To hell with you an' your rest!" retorted Aubrey. "You may be law-abidin', but you seem to forget that it's a coast-guard man you're makin' fun of. An' now that you've showed the service so little respect, I'm goin' to assert my authority jist to show you who's boss here. You can postpone goin' to bed until I've had a look at your lobsters—an' a good long look, too, by Godfrey!"

"Damned if ye will!" roared Nathan. "You aint in uniform. Here—git back from that crate!"—as Aubrey bent and began to paw through the lobsters in it.

Nathan rushed at Aubrey, but the surfman jumped nimbly to one side.

"I'll warn ye—it's the United States Gover'mint you're foolin' with—not me personal!" Aubrey cautioned the big fisherman.

Nathan stepped back. "Thar's my dory," he stood his ground, pointing to the nearest boat, his face black with fury. "Now, young feller, I'll invite ye to tech my lobsters. I'll see whether a young sprout who aint in uniform'll s'arch my property or not. If ye tech that dory, ye'll do it over my dead body!"

For a few seconds Aubrey hesitated. He knew he was nominally within his authority, uniform or no uniform. Nor did the colossal strength and fighting reputation of Nathan deter him. But he fully realized that no matter what course of action he pursued now, he would emerge the loser. Public sentiment would favor

the Holways if they administered a sound thrashing to him. And Cap would be sure to reprimand him for such interference with law-abiding citizens, if not to take steps to have him dropped from the service altogether.

But on the other hand, if he refused to search the dory, the Holways would advertise their triumph, and he would be

your hero's thinkin' better of it, Miss Weston," he chuckled. "He knows tormented well that if he gits hurt doin' it, Cap Cole'll back me an' my boys up."

"Then you're goin' to let Cap Cole scare you out o' doin' your duty, Aubrey?" Mamie's tone was ironically sweet. "Oh, if my father was only here! I know what *he'd* do!"

Aubrey clenched his fists, took a step forward—and another. He knew what doughty old Cap Weston would do if he



The watching Aubrey grumbled to himself. Amos' "smugglers" were harmless lobstermen!

branded an even greater coward than Jansen's lie made him out to be.

In the midst of his reflections, while Nathan and his sons stood tense and silent eagerly waiting for his next move, a twig snapped in the upland. Nathan looked in that direction, and so did Aubrey. The gleam of the flashlight disclosed Mamie, Amos and Emma hiding there, partly shielded by the scrawny pines.

"Mamie—go back to the house!" shouted Aubrey.

But Mamie stepped out of her partial shelter, Emma following her on to the beach, while Amos scrambled up the steep path in precipitate retreat to the house.

"What are you waitin' for, Aubrey?" asked Mamie, her eyes flashing, her voice shrill with excitement. "Aint you goin' to search that dory?"

Nathan laughed clownishly. "I cal'late

were alive and placed in such a predicament. The hero of the wreck of the *David Rothwell* would do what he had set out to do, or die in the attempt!

Straight for the dory Aubrey marched determinedly. He heard Nathan's bellow as he and his sons rushed to the attack.

Aubrey jumped back in time to avoid the headlong charge of Nathan, but in doing so he collided with Russ. The eldest son had not recovered from the impact when he received a terrific punch just above his waistline, and he doubled up gasping for breath. Aubrey whirled on Fred and planted a wicked wallop on that bewildered youth's jaw. Like an infuriated bull goaded by its tormentors in the ring, Aubrey faced Enoch, and after a short exchange of blows, put a damper on the second son's ardor by delivering a haymaker to his nose.

Panting from his exertion, he turned to Nathan, who bore down on him with lowered head and flying fists. The surfman sidestepped—but not soon enough, for one of the fisherman's blows found its mark on Aubrey's chin. Half dazed though he was, Aubrey countered with a right to the giant's jaw, which caused no more perceptible damage than birdshot to the hide of a rhinoceros.

From that instant on, the fight was a rough-and-tumble, free-for-all, and general rough-house. No chance for Aubrey to display any of the science he had acquired boxing with Paty. He struck out blindly, saved himself from his attackers by quick footwork, oppressed from all sides at once. Blows light and heavy landed on his cheeks, chin, and jaws, while he danced and dodged in the center of the mêlée, confused by the odds against him, but keeping his antagonists on the jump by avoiding dirty tactics on their part like tripping or kicking.

Then as they edged in closer, he broke through the ring surrounding him and ran a few yards up the beach, where he faced them again. He launched a right at Enoch which staggered that aggressive little bunch of wiry sinews. But at the same time the coast-guard received a crushing punch on the cheek from Russ. He managed, however, to dodge past Enoch and escape from the circle which was forming around him again. And there, his back to the harbor, some fifty yards upshore from the dories, once more he defied the four oncoming fishermen.

AUBREY was breathing hard, his nose bleeding, cheeks and lips cut, one eye closed, and his shirt flapping in shreds. Time and again he broke clear; and the scene of battle shifted frequently up and down the beach.

After one of Aubrey's eel-like escapes, Nathan shoved his sons back and faced the surfman alone. "Got—enough?" the huge lobsterman panted, his leathery face daubed with blood, his thick lips split.

"Hell—no! I aint begun to fight yit!" Aubrey defied him. "Try it ag'in! Come on, I'm askin' ye!"

Russ and Enoch, battle-grimed and rent as to raiment, started for the cornered surfman. But Nathan snatched Russ by the arm and flung him back, and stepped between Enoch and Aubrey.

"You stay out o' this!" he commanded

his offspring. "This Sears—he needs a dose o' the medicine such as only one o' my generation can hand him. I'll take care o' him in the good old-fashioned way. You three go back to the dories an' see 'at no one swipes our lobsters."

With a rush, the big fisherman resumed the conflict. Nathan was fighting, now, with knees as well as fists—the kind of fighting the old-time Yankee skippers resorted to when all other methods of subduing refractory members of their crews failed. In his younger days Nathan Holway had earned the nickname of "Bloody Nathan" from his proficiency in this style of fighting. Aubrey had seen Cap Cole fight that way once when he half killed a crazy-drunk sailor, so he knew what to expect.

He avoided Bloody Nathan by sidestepping, smashing left and right uppercuts to the fisherman's lowered face. But the endurance of that hulk of bone and muscle was nothing short of marvelous, and he seemed to be wholly unaffected.

Now and then Aubrey felt the impact of Bloody Nathan's huge fist as it smashed through his defense. Once Nathan's knee caught the coast-guard in the abdomen, and he doubled up, seeing black. But he pulled himself together, and came back at his antagonist with a left to the jaw and a right uppercut to the chin, and again avoided the rush of the foul-fighting fisherman by sidestepping and smashing in with another left and right.

The pace was beginning to tell on Nathan. Aubrey's wind was less expended, severely sapped though it was, for he didn't waste energy in headlong rushes. One of Bloody Nathan's eyes was closed, and his bleeding mouth lolled open. His lungs were wheezy and his knees shaky.

Then Aubrey rushed. He delivered a quick, swinging blow with his left that smashed through the fisherman's awkward defense and crashed upon his bulbous nose. He groaned, and sank to the sand like a pole-axed steer.

The fall of their parent seemed to fire the three sons with fresh zeal. They pounced on Aubrey from all quarters, and he, his energy sapped by his vigorous fray with their father, went down on the sand under them, while they started to pummel him unmercifully.

But Aubrey twisted and squirmed clear of the three, leaving his undershirt in their clutches, and upsetting Fred, recovered his footing. He knew he was

licked; the fight with Nathan had taken too much out of him to go through it all over again with them. But no matter how badly he was mauled, his was the satisfaction of making Bloody Nathan take the count. Mamie, wherever she was, couldn't accuse him of being a coward now. Neither could Cap, whatever Cap would think of his judgment in starting the affair.

He didn't care about the Number One surfman's job now. Nor did Mamie seem a vital factor in his life. She had got him into this mess. It would be interesting to find out whether she would stick to him or not if the Number One job went to some one else.

HE was standing again with his back to the harbor, the three sons of Bloody Nathan facing him but not carrying the fight to him. Near by he could make out Mamie trying to reach him, but Amos and Emma were holding her back.

"Come on, yuh damned coward!" Aubrey taunted Russ.

"Come on yerself!" retorted Russ.

"Start somethin'!" squealed Enoch.

And Aubrey accepted the invitation by charging Russ, head down, blindly, adopting Bloody Nathan's method of attack—a method which had vindicated itself in free-for-all fighting. Again and again he flailed his fists at the fisherman's eldest son, who gave no ground, but stood resigned to his punishment, if punishment it really were which Aubrey, in his exhausted state, was administering.

He was gripped by the shoulder and drawn firmly back, his fists fanning the air.

"Sears—behave! You've gone fur enough with this!"

Aubrey weakly raised his head—and his one open eye took in Cap Cole, holding his shoulder with one strong hand gripping what appeared to be the cylindrical metal case of a beach-torch in the other.

"I aint—gone fur—enough!" Aubrey defied his commander, struggling feebly and unsuccessfully to wrench himself loose. "I aint—*begun*—to fight!"

"It's all his doin', Cap!" groaned Bloody Nathan, staggering out of the fog to the Santuck commander, while his three sons retreated to the two dories. "Sears interfered with us, Cap—in the name o'

the coast-guard—out o' spite to keep us from gittin' a decent night's rest—him in plain clothes—with no authority—"

"Why are you makin' such a spectacle o' yerself ag'inst a law-abidin' citizen like Nathan?" Cole severely questioned the young surfman. "It's a good thing Amos Swift called me up an' told me you was in hot water at the landin', judgin' by the loud talk he heard. If you had your pistol here, I cal'late they'd 'a' been murder committed—with you in your present frame o' mind. If Jansen wa'n't on patrol an' he'd come here with me—"

"Yeah," Aubrey flung back. "It's always Jansen. 'Twas him that lied about me that night on Salt Marsh. An' you're no better'n he is, to b'lieve him, an' send that lyin' report to the superintendent!" He reached into his hip pocket, drew an automatic pistol, and handed it to Cap, holding it by the barrel. "Here's my gun, Cap," he said. "It's been in my pants pocket all durin' the scrap."

Cap accepted the weapon without comment, relinquishing his grip on Aubrey's shoulder.

"I'm through with the damn' coast-guard an' Santuck!" Aubrey thus kicked over the traces and stove in the dashboard. "Through with you, an' Jansen, an' your lies 'bout me. I'm going to sea—inland—*anywhere* to git away from you two. I told you the truth that night on Salt Marsh. An' what did *you* do? You believed what Jansen told yuh, an' worse'n that—you put it in the report to headquarters, an' it got in the paper. I done tonight what I set out to do—I've got *that* much satisfaction out of it, no matter how big a fool you an' the Howesport folks call me!"

A small hand tenderly dabbed at his empurpled eye with a tiny handkerchief.

"Good for you, Aubrey!" Mamie applauded. "We wont change our plans a mite, Aubrey, you 'n' me. We'll git along somehow—I'll go through anything to make you happy." She turned savagely on Cap. "The idea o' you belittlin' my Aubrey after he's been—so brave—" A sob choked her.

BUT Cap laughed, and again laid his hand on Aubrey's shoulder. "You're *not* goin' to leave the coast-guard, Sears!" he declared. "You're goin' to be the nex' Number One surfman at Santuck station, if I have anything to say about it—an' I

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cal'late I will! You don't s'pose for a minute that I b'lieved Jansen after he put that piece in the Boston paper, do ye? That wa'n't what I reported to the superintendent. I didn't mention your name in that report. An' when I seen that newspaper, I telephoned it to find out where they got the information, an' they said 'From Jansen.' He didn't have no authority to put that in without gittin' me to endorse it. It's an open wil'lotion o' discipline, an' it's proof to me that he aint to be trusted. An' he wont command Sandy Holler if I c'n help it, by golly!"

"Then why didn't you tell Aubrey that today?" indignantly asked Mamie.

"Because," Cap replied, "I wanted to have somethin' better to report to the superintendent 'bout Sears before I recommended him for Jansen's place. An' I cal'lated the best way to stir him up so's I could do that would be to make him think he's wuth less'n a healthy damn, an' git his fightin' dander up."

"I CAN'T see whar he *is* wuth more'n that," spoke up Nathan, who had recovered sufficiently from his mauling to listen interestedly to the conversation of Mamie and Cap. The glare of a flashlight down the beach revealed through the thinning fog the fisherman's three sons and four uniformed men of the Santuck crew grouped near the dories. "D'you coast-guard folks promote brave surfmen who pick on harmless fishermen an' damn' nigh beat the tar out of 'em?" he sneered.

"No—not for beatin' up *harmless* fishermen," countered Cap. "But for molestin' them engaged in *this* kind o' fishin'." He held up the metal cylinder.

Nathan swayed drunkenly when he looked at it. "Oh, hell!" he moaned. "I was dependin' on Russ an' the boys to take care o' that!"

"You was too busy fightin'—you an' your boys, Nathan—to notice my Santuck boys searchin' your lobsters," explained Cap. "This tube is full of opium. I'm familiar with it—it's the same kind the *Seabright's* been runnin' ashore. Now I cal'late I know why Jansen advanced such good argymints to me to discontinue the Howesport harbor patrol. I cal'late his examination in court—an' yourn, too, Nathan—will be real interestin'!"

"Hereafter, Sears,"—he turned to Aubrey,—"*what* you say at Santuck station goes! That's final!"

Alexander's One-Man Band

*From bass drum to whang-harp,
the whole band makes music
and mirth for you.*

By ARTHUR
T. AKERS

Illustrated by
Everett Lowry

GINFOOTS ALEXANDER, colored, roosted dejectedly upon a box in front of his guestless barbecue-stand on Baptist Hill—and suffered. Across the street, the rival establishment of Henry Roebuck, with no better cook, cuisine, or credit-policy, was a perfect beehive of business. And only the deafest of patrons could fail to notice the cause of the difference—a mechanical piano, newly installed on credit, with which Henry was agitating the atmosphere and crippling competition for blocks around.

Hence Mr. Alexander upon his box, mournfully considering improvements in his own place, policies, and parsimony. And groaning—for such plans entailed expense, and expense gave Ginfoots a pain in the purse.

Yet had his prescience been greater his groans would undoubtedly have been still louder. For even then a conversation was being initiated, events beginning so to shape themselves as to complicate immensely the present predicament of Ginfoots. . . .

"Whar at does a busted boy eat in dis heah town?" a small strange darky opened an important conference with a longer and larger local denizen.

"'Pends on who feedin' you," qualified the other sadly. "Me, I lives heah an' still



aint got no reg'lar luck wid rations. Jes' been eatin' Tuesdays heah lately."

His interrogator's face fell. This was Wednesday.

"Whut yo' name?" the local half of the gathering indicated further interest.

"Name Ip'cac Ingalls. From Bumin'ham. I's down heah busted an' on business. Cain't git my mind off eatin'-vittles."

"Gladstone's mine—Gladstone Smith—an' hongry too," vouchsafed the other unfortunate. "Times sho is tight. Huccome you has to come so fur from home to git yo'se'f busted?"

Warming toward a kindred spirit, Ipecac fetched forth and offered in evidence a couple of the spotted cubes technically known as African golf-balls. "Had me some money," he recited, "whut my wife Susie gimme fo' 'spenses. Now I jes' got dem dices: dey's loaded wrong fo' dis town."

"Dey aint let no strange nigger win no money heah," Gladstone touched upon a local idiosyncrasy.

"N'r keep hit, neither," Ipecac ruefully completed his complaint. "'Sides, hit wuz one dese heah D'mop'lis boys whut come all de way to Bumin'ham an' staht all dis heah trouble—takin' 'way big money from my wife Susie."

"Huccome?"

"Nigger I aint see come round my house, say he name Profess'r Dinghouse, from D'mop'lis heah. Say he gittin' up a

bigger buryin'-society all ov' de State, wid bigger bands an' mo' mourners dan any. Dat nigger got on sich a long-tail coat dat Susie done buy fifty dollars' stock in de s'ciety from him. Den he give her ol' whang-harp fo' premium. Dat jes' befo' she find out dey aint no s'ciety."

"Gives her which?"

IPECAC reached under his shirt and produced a jew's-harp in good working order. "Dis heah whang-harp. Soon's Susie git th'u' flingin' fits an' skilletts, she flang dis heah harp an' nine dollars at me—"

"Flings which?" interrupted Gladstone skeptically.

"De nine dollars wuz travelin' 'spenses," Ipecac hastened to explain. "De rest of hit wuz whut dese heah D'mop'lis boys wins off me. Now I cain't git back—n'r eat! 'Find dat Dinghouse an' git back my fifty dollars!' says Susie jes' befo' de big fryin'-pan follers me out de do'. 'An' make hit snappy or I's comin' after you!' she says."

"Aint no luck bein' ma'ied," sympathized Gladstone. "Dat all she say?"

"Aint know. She still talkin' when I jump de fence."

"Aint no Dinghouse round heah dat I knows of," Gladstone added to the current depression.

Ipecac took stock. "Whar at c'n a boy sell good whang-harp in dis town fo' vittles-money?" he queried practically.

The first idea that Gladstone had had in over four years struck him just here like a ton of brick. Even a stranger like Ipecac could tell that something unusual had befallen Gladstone. The return of coherence indicated itself as sure to be well worth waiting for.

At length it came. "I—I—I still got half-int'est in dat big bass drum dat I gits from Doc Em'son once!" Gladstone finally managed to enunciate.

Ipecac felt that the mountain had brought forth a mouse. "Yeah, an' I knows nigger whut owns *all* of a good garbage-route up in Bumin'ham, too!" he countered unimpressed. "But whut ol' drum got do wid us eatin'?"

"Listen an' nourish yo'se'f, boy!" persisted Gladstone. "Whut good is half a drum do by hitse'f? An' whut you git fo' ol' whang-harp, is you try sell hit, cep'n a big laugh in de face? But s'posen us git up a *band* wid 'em?"

Ipecac's stomach interrupted his brain by cheering wildly. Even more quickly than his startled intellect, it recognized a sound idea connected with eating.

And, "Whut you killin' all dis heah time fo'?" he turned sharply on the self-confessed owner of the drum.

"Whut time?" Gladstone lumbered on in his intellectual rear.

"Waitin' round so long befo' you stahts after yo' drum, dat's whut! I done been heah all mawnin' wid de whang-harp, an' heah 'tis 'way past dinner-time an' all you done done 'bout dat drum is *talk*! Git action, boy—git action! Ol' band r'arin' to hire out, an' you late wid de drum!"

Ipecac's anxiety and appetite were infectious. Gladstone grew guilty over his delay. He saw now that a boy ought to go about with his drum more—never could tell when he was liable to need it in a hurry.

"Don't stray off none," he advised his fellow-musician. "An' when you sees de dust risin' round Hogan's Alley, git ready wid de gangway: dat be me an' de drum!"

"Boy, foller de whang-harp to vittles!" proclaimed Ipecac hopefully. "An' 'member I's de business man'ger dis heah band. Bass drummers gits kind of numb 'bove de neck from bein' round de big noise so much."

GLADSTONE hung up a new round-trip record for a tall boy carrying a bass drum on the return trip. And he had an

idea and a half now. When old brain started to working, looked like it didn't know when to quit! Hence his proud display of what the half idea had evolved—an old violin-case, empty.

"Put yo' whang-harp in de fiddle-case when us hires out," he advised Mr. Ingalls. "Makes de band look bigger to carry de whang-harp prominent dat way."

"Keep dat bass drum out yo' pants pocket—you might lose hit," countered the business-manager sarcastically. "Res't'rants needs music: us needs vittles. Li'ble make trade wid dat pickle-face' boy settin' out front on dat box yander."

Gladstone gazed box-ward and grew pessimistic. "Aint no percentage in messin' wid dat Ginfoot's nigger up dar," he objected. "He done choke fo' eagles to death now squeezin' de two-bitses whut dey on, so tight! Ev'ry time he puts out dey has to give him some'n first to put him to sleep so he wont hu't so bad."

"So dawggone hongry I cain't pass *no* rest'rants," demurred Ipecac. "Dat nigger *need* a band, too: Look how all dem big-eatin' boys flockin' round de place wid de pianner 'cross de way! Dat huccome dat other place git so much money to pay fo' pianners. Music pay fo' hitse'f."

"Henry Roebuck aint pay fo' hit," corrected Gladstone. "He git hit on credit—dime a day keep de muddyfoots away. Us call collectuhs 'muddyfoots,' down heah."

"Ginfoot's c'n make a better deal wid me," persisted Ipecac. "Swap rations fo' music, an' den it wont hu't him so bad when he pay off."

Gladstone's digestive apparatus nudged him sharply as Ipecac made this point. It seemed sound. "You's de business-man'ger," he weakened. "An' is you pull *dis* deal, I'll tell de world you is!"

Ipecac gripped the violin-case enclosing his whang-harp. Gladstone poised his forty-two-inch bass drum on the concavity that starvation had made of his stomach. Two abreast, the newly-formed band approached employment and eating as personified for them by Mr. Ginfoot's Alexander.

"Aint no luck to none dem playin' pianners," Ipecac opened negotiations delicately.

Ginfoot's openly held the same views for five minutes.

"But a *band*, now," resumed Ipecac at their close, "dat's different."

"And cawsts mo'," Ginfoots interjected. "Not when you talkin' wid me," pursued Ipecac patiently. "Me an' my 'sistant heah, us is diffe'nt. Us like music—an' loves vittles. Heaps times us aint charge nothin' at all fo' playin'—"

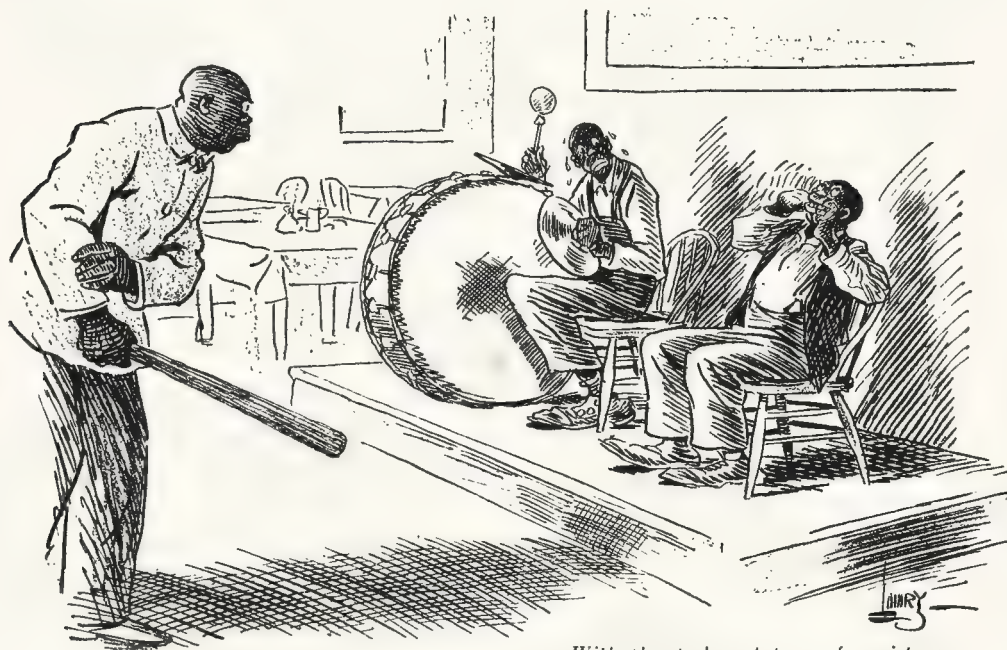
Ginfoots brightened visibly.

"—Jes' *boa'ds* hit out wid de rest'rant whut hire us!"

ger you got ev'ything but speed an' control. Whut us gwine do now?"

"Gwine git 'way from dese heah freight-yahds first. Bad luck gittin' too thick round me now, an' mo' of hit li'ble git off a train any minute. Next thing us knows, my wife Susie git heah an' cotch me too fur out from cyclone cellar!"

But Gladstone was suddenly too busy



With the dash and fury of a virtuoso, Ipecac flung himself into melody, leaving Gladstone stranded.

Ipecac paused to eye Ginfoots with the expectant look of a pup under the dining-table. Ginfoots considered—so long, indeed, as to give Gladstone the sensation of starving to death in his tracks. A consideration painfully broken, too, by the merry tinkle of Henry's opposing mechanical instrument, openly demonstrating that credit was mightier than cash.

"If you lays off de dessert—an' goes easy on de meat," Ginfoots finally delivered himself, "us trades."

Gladstone was halfway to a table before Ginfoots concluded—and the blow fell.

"Stahtin' in *tomorrer*," Mr. Alexander wrecked him in mid-flight.

DIZZILY Ipecac and Gladstone foregathered behind a freight-car half a mile distant for reorganization purposes.

"Hit wouldn't been so bad if I hadn't been so close I could smell de cookin'!" moaned Gladstone. "Boy, as band man'

to listen. Ipecac's talk about trouble getting off of a train had him in no frame of mind to view with equanimity the slow sliding-back of a box-car door near by. For all he knew, an Amazon was liable to descend and start something while he was too weak to run. Then, with a sigh of relief, he perceived that the disembarking one wore trousers. And with his back still turned to them a bumping and clanking materialized on the car floor, culminating in the appearance on the ground of a bow-legged ducky in a dingy gold-braided coat.

Dusting the latter noble garment, the stranger next began unloading what at first sight seemed to be the entire stock of a wholesale dealer in musical instruments. A folding camp-stool, a snare drum with cymbals and pedal attachment, castanets, a mouth organ, and a peculiar-appearing harness revealed themselves in order.

Gladstone had been looking the longest, but Ipecac perceived first the true nature and significance of the new arrival.

"Dat nigger's a *one-man band*!" he confided hoarsely to the horrified Gladstone.

"Yeah, an' if Ginfoots sees him now us is sunk," Gladstone peered even deeper into a dismal future. "One-man band *eats* less dan a two-man band."

"'Specially wid you in hit," gloomed Ipecac. "Us got to keep Ginfoots from knowin' dis boy's in town. An' him from knowin' 'bout Ginfoots; dat's all."

"How us gwine do dat?" Gladstone beat Ipecac to the next puzzle in the book.

Ipecac scratched his head unproductively and looked ill. With his brain already reeling beneath its overload of matters connected with Susie, Dinghouse, diet, and music, he was now confronted with unfair competition of the most dangerous type. Moreover, he had to work fast. For the newest arrival in Demopolis musical circles was already getting himself into his harness in a most business-like way.

"Mawnin', brother! You sho is all busted out wid music!" Ipecac hurriedly hailed the latest cause of their uneasiness.

"Mawnin'. When I plays, pipe-o'gans gits jealous," modestly admitted the new fly in their ointment, fastening another buckle.

Ipecac's mouth opened and his feet chilled at certain increasingly imminent dire possibilities. If this one-man band started up in the open this way, words or music were bound to reach the economical ears of Ginfoots—with fatal cancellations in musical and gastronomical circles quite likely to follow. Something must be done to eliminate this professional peril!

BUT here, without a second to spare, sheer inspiration rushed to the present aid of Ipecac, with no inkling of what was later to follow in its train. And present aid was what Ipecac wanted.

"C'n you play jazz wid all dem things at once?" further questioned Mr. Ingalls.

"Me? I wuz standin' right dar when jazz wuz invēnted," conceded the man of many instruments. "When I plays jazz, even de sidewalk shimmies! An' I got money, but craves mo'!" He patted a bulge in one braid-covered pocket impressively. Gladstone could have collected a Carnegie medal for the restraint he heroically and instantly put himself to, to

refrain from trying to borrow fifty cents. It wouldn't be right from a rival, was all!

"I use' to live heah, long time 'go," resumed the musical marvel. "Aims to settle back down heah fo' reg'lar job of bandin', an' save money."

Messrs. Ingalls and Smith exchanged worried glances. If this boy and Ginfoots ever get together the remaining money in town was likely to be retired from circulation for lack of use.

"Sho is lucky us meets up wid you," improvised Ipecac while he prodded his brain brutally for further emergency measures suitable to the crisis.

And again that much-abused organ made good. "'Bout sevum miles, straight up de road heah," he resumed craftily, "dey's new cullud folks' road-house open. Swell eatin' but fool notions 'bout usin' raddio 'stead of band. White folks sell 'em de raddio—but jes' 'bout time de dancin' git good, somebody staht preachin' over hit or adv'tisin' 'bout some new kind of ha'r-straight'ner, an' ruin de footwork—"

"How fur off you say dat place?" interrupted the one-man audience in a businesslike manner. "Hit sound like dey lookin' fo' me."

"Sho is. Dat jes' whut I fixin' tell you. De shawt-cut walkin's better'n de ridin'. An' you sho will like dat place after you finds hit. Man whut run hit jes' ax me dis mawnin' c'n I git him a good band. You tell him I sont you."

"Whut yo' name?" queried the music-master as he unharnessed himself.

"Paul Whiteman," returned Ipecac, who read the white folks' billboards.

"Dat sho wuz fast piece of lyin' you done!" admired Gladstone as the musical menace began framing circular sections of the scenery between his bowed legs in the direction of the glowingly described road-house job. "But whut us gwine do when he finds out dey aint no road-house, an' come back?"

"Dat b'long to *tomorrer's* business," Ipecac deprecated premature worry. "Time dat boy walk sevum miles on dem funny laigs to save cab-fare he got to rest hisse'f. Not countin' de extra time hit take him to find 'Paul Whiteman' in D'mop'lis. Whut day de week dis, no-how?"

"Aint know. Aint got no watch. 'Sides, whut you keer? You aint got de price to go nowhar."



"Lemme show whut happens to niggers whut takes my money an' fo'gits to come back wid nothin'!"

"Yeah, but Susie has! She says git home Friday wid her fifty back from dat P'fessor Dinghouse—or tell de und'taker whut color sunflowers I craves on my cawffin. Been so busy wid my business I done lost track of de days. But Susie aint. Friday she say—and Friday she git rough."

"Maybe hit aint Friday yit," comforted Gladstone. "Time always seem go faster to a ma'ied man when he 'way from home 'joyin' hisse'f. Whut us gwine do now?"

"Do only thing us got de price of, boy—sleep in dis heah fence-cawner twel times git better. When us wakes up hit be mawnin', and' us staht eatin' den, 'count playin' fo' dat rest'rant boy wid de padlocks on he pants pockets."

THE early sun of an August morning brought forth from the bushes fringing the railroad tracks a couple of appetites with human attachments. "Us eats to-day!" caroled Ipecac weakly.

"Us does if dat Ginfoot's cain't think up no mo' new ways of puttin' hit off fo' us," amended Gladstone pessimistically. "An' whut us do if dat one-man band come back?"

"Dar you go!" snapped Ipecac. "All time pesterin' 'bout somep'n! How dat circle-laigged nigger gwine git back so soon wid de sides of he feets all wore down from walkin'?"

"Dat boy got money to ride—he jes' too tight to spend hit," persisted Gladstone.

"Shet up an' grab dat drum," the business-manager dismissed further idle talk. "Us got eat, an' find dat Dinghouse an' fifty dollars, an' build up de business playin' fo' Ginfoot's today. Friday comin' on."

Then, without warning, a new shadow fell. An innocent question of Ipecac's—meant to clear, not cloud, the musical skies—precipitated it.

"Whut us gwine play first?" he broached to Gladstone as they hopefully and hungrily neared the establishment of Ginfoot's.

"Aint know but one tune. Us plays dat reg'lar."

The ground rocked beneath Ipecac. Possibilities opened into yawning abysses before him. Suppose—

"W-w-whut tune dat you knows, nigger?" he stammered fearfully.

"'Dixie,'" stated Gladstone firmly.

"On de drum?"

"On de drum."

Ipecac reeled. For he too was a one-tune man. And the tune of Gladstone was not the tune of Ipecac! Where Gladstone knew only "Dixie" on the drum. Ipecac

was skilled only in "Turkey in the Straw" on the whang-harp. And between the two a great gulf was fixed which no amount of musical stalling could bridge in time now!

"Whut make yo' eyes stick out so fur, nigger?" Gladstone gave the first intimation that Ipecac's inward turmoil was producing outward symptoms.

"Jes' thinkin' 'bout somep'n," moaned Ipecac, sparring for time.

"You got plenty think 'bout now widout addin' nothin' extra," commented Gladstone sagely. "Wid yo' wife fixin' come aft' you if you aint git back de fifty from Dinghouse—an' not no Dinghouse heah—you best lay off dem new thinkin's, boy,—you got plenty old ones to 'tend to yit."

Sickened, Ipecac agreed. Here he had devoted twenty-four precious hours, besides, to getting up a scheme that wouldn't work; to organizing a band whose members could not play the same tune at the same—or any other—time! Not to speak of the injection into the situation of a one-man rival seeking the same engagement on a close margin of profit. . . .

And over, under, and through the misery of Ipecac ran the ceaseless thump and tinkle and plink of Henry's mechanical piano, proclaiming the power of credit as it pounded away above the soul-rending odors of bacon and coffee and griddle-cakes that also issued from his restaurant.

Ginfoots awaited them sourly. His barbecue-stand was empty, his cook idle, while customers fought for seats in the rival establishment where credit had been crystallized into music. Nor could he find anything in the outer appearance of the approaching bandmen to inspire cheer. Sleeping in the railway yards had made them none the nattier.

"Is breakfas' ready yit?" Mr. Ingalls finished ruining the morning for his future employer.

"Dat's a hell of a way to staht work!" complained Mr. Alexander.

"Cain't play good on no empty stomach," argued Ipecac as he headed unerringly for the nearest knife and fork.

"YOU done e't up a week's wages a'ready!" further mourned Mr. Alexander twenty minutes later as he watched a bus-boy develop fallen arches from carrying away emptied plates. "Now loosen up wid de music!"

Gladstone's feet made frenzied move-

ments on the floor. In a minute more it would be every man for himself here! Things were getting right down to a climax where he either had to make Dixie sound like "Turkey in the Straw," or Ipecac had to make the Turkey tune sound like "Dixie." Musically, and from a health-and-accident standpoint, it was a ticklish situation. Therefore Gladstone divided his gaze anxiously between the door and the face of the band's business-manager. If Ipecac's brain were in running order there could never be a better time for it to function.

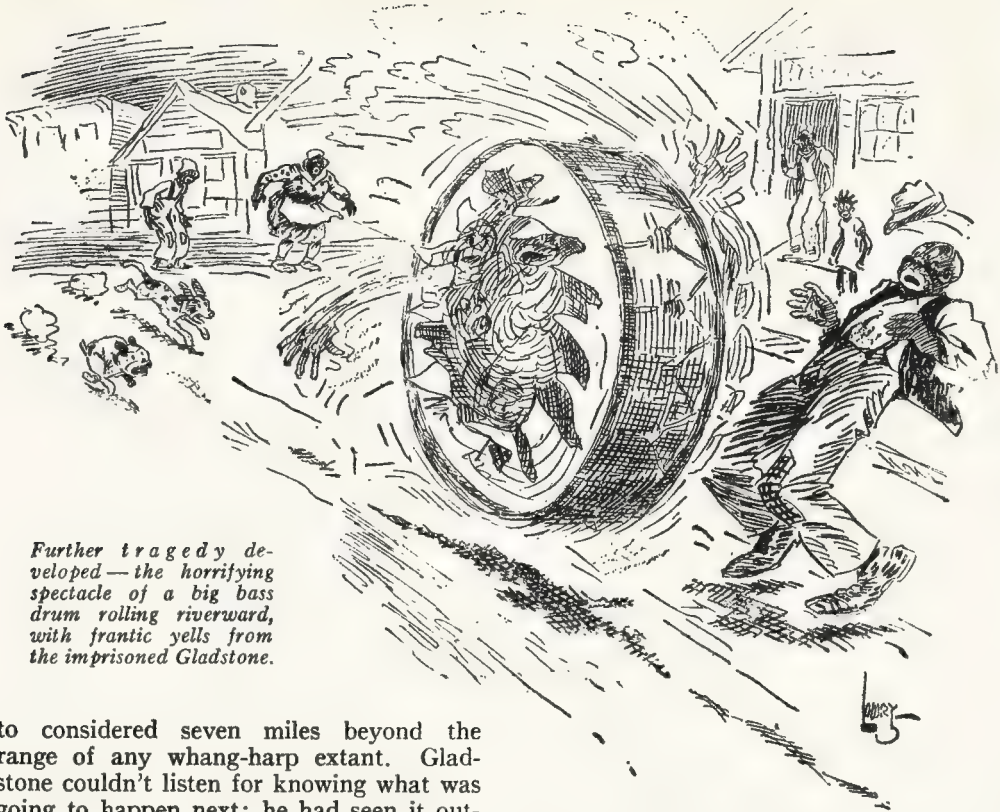
For his part Ginfoots was betraying increasing signs of impatience. Too much time had elapsed between eating and paying—or playing.

Reading his thoughts, the despairing Mr. Ingalls grasped wretchedly at the first idea that floated his way. "Us plays 'Tu'key in de Straw' firs'," he stalled as he struggled in mock difficulty with the clasps of his ill-starred violin-case.

Gladstone grew gray-faced and slid a foot nearer an exit, fiddling nervously with his drum-sticks. Only "Dixie" could keep him out of the hospital now—and Ipecac was proposing "Turkey in the Straw!" Doors and windows began to look better and better to Gladstone: they led to elsewhere. But in looking before he leaped, Gladstone developed a new complication for himself. He saw too much. Right outside the door was a sight to cause him to stiffen in terror; hadn't so much been getting ready to happen in Demopolis since Gladstone could remember. Worse, it was too late to do anything about it now!

Ipecac couldn't have picked a worse moment, in that respect, for his violin-case to open. But he couldn't fool forever. And open it flew, to reveal, all but lost in one corner, the lowly whang-harp.

The effect on Ginfoots was bad—distinctly bad. Face, manner, and movement toward a baseball bat behind the counter all indicated his view that he had been imposed upon. Ipecac felt acutely the need of diversion—for Mr. Alexander. Recollections of something the white folks had said about the power of music to soothe the savage breast recurred in a most timely way to Mr. Ingalls. With the dash and fury of a virtuoso, Ipecac flung himself into melody, leaving Gladstone stranded upon the musical shore. Ginfoots' good right hand closed upon the baseball bat, and Ipecac achieved a *fortissimo* hither-



Further tragedy developed—the horrifying spectacle of a big bass drum rolling riverward, with frantic yells from the imprisoned Gladstone.

to considered seven miles beyond the range of any whang-harp extant. Gladstone couldn't listen for knowing what was going to happen next; he had seen it outside the doorway. Ipecac sure would look funny—

But even the thin and fleeting humor of this thought was dissipated just here by Ginfoots' turning his attention to Gladstone. "Whar at de drummin'?" he desired to know. "You two eats 'nough to feed a singin'-society, an' all I gits is one bum tune on a whang-harp! Tu'n loose on dat drum, nigger, or I tu'n loose on you wid dis heah bat!"

So far as Gladstone was concerned, the spirit was willing but the sticks were weak. Besides, it was too late!

"Whar dey?" a new voice rang in the doorway. "Lead me to 'em! Whar at dem two niggers whut tell me dey's road-house sevum miles back in de bushes, whar at dey aint even no road?"

IT flashed over Gladstone that he was a better prophét than a life-insurance risk. This bow-legged return in the doorway was what he had been telling Ipecac about all the time. Now Ipecac could look out for himself. Gladstone was busy and going to be busier. Already he was perceiving the inconveniences of a bass drum when a boy was in a hurry. For as the much-peevied one-man band leaped for Ipecac,

Gladstone leaped for an exit—with disastrous results for both himself and his oversized instrument. For in his haste he stumbled and stepped sonorously through its top with one of the largest feet in captivity.

Simultaneously, "Whang!" the one-man organization registered with a cymbal upon Ipecac's knob-like head. *Sock!* the bat of Ginfoots accompanied it. *Boom!* crashed the musical marvel's drum upon a near-by spot. *Whir-r-r-click!* connected the castanets. Shortly after which matters grew interesting indeed, with the full personnel of the competing musical organizations locked in yelling combat upon the floor, while Ginfoots plied his bat lustily upon whatever portions of the musicians came uppermost.

Yet for the frenzied Gladstone, with his drum-bound foot wedged awkwardly between two tables, was reserved a further realization that times never get so bad that they cannot grow worse. One hurried look out the still-open door told all; Gladstone saw entirely too much for one in his hampered position.

Forthwith Gladstone took the turtle for his model. And scarcely had he coiled his long frame within the protecting metal

shell of his damaged drum when Ipecac too received the devastating news!

The first intimation that well-known impresario had that it actually was Friday came in a familiar feminine voice raised in: "Gimme dat bat, nigger! You jes' pat-tin' him wid hit! Lemme show whut happens to niggers whut takes my money an' fo'gits to come back wid nothin'!"

Susie!

Ipecac shriveled and shrank. The one-man band was slipping from his nerveless grasp as Mr. Ingalls awaited the first mighty impact of the bat as wielded by his wife. And he did not have to wait long. "*C-r-r-r-ack!*" it fell.

But here bewilderment began. The bat fell, true—but not upon Ipecac. Instead, there was an outraged outcry from a total stranger to Susie—the disheveled one-man band. And, more puzzling still, she repeated her error: once, twice, thrice—while Ipecac went free in a most unhusbandly manner.

Perceiving which, Mr. Ingalls bestirred himself before any corrections of her mistake in identities should be attempted. And it was in the haste of this stirring that further tragedy developed. Scrambling wildly, he stumbled heavily against the finely, delicately poised drum within which Gladstone had successfully pulled in his neck—which accounted for the immediately horrifying spectacle of a big bass drum rolling slowly doorward, then out, and down the long riverward slope of Baptist Hill to the accompaniment of frantic yells from the imprisoned Gladstone.

But as fast as Ipecac grasped one phenomenon two more rose to take its place! The sudden silence that had fallen upon Henry's perpetual-motion piano, for one thing—it was uncanny, after days of unceasing music. And the deft way in which Susie was now going through the pockets of the struggling one-man band, for another. "Jes' like she ma'ied to him!" marveled Ipecac at as much distance as he could manage.

But the marveling was only for a moment. Then there was a fresh cloud of dust moving riverward on Baptist Hill, while Susie stood staring stupidly at an uninhabited gold-braided coat in her hands.

THIS in a continued quiet which produced in the apprehensive Ipecac a growing uneasiness. When Susie said least she was liable to do most. Ginfoots was looking

out the window, but no longer pickle-faced. The number of things Ipecac couldn't understand mounted momentarily. For Susie was beginning to look triumphant, and was laying down the baseball bat. Even Ginfoots had relaxed his scowl for something that passed with him for a smile.

Ipecac felt for the first time that a husband might speak without pushing his luck dangerously far. Even the unwonted quietness from the direction of the restaurant of Henry across the way was being broken now by the gabble of voices outside.

"W-w-w-whut you beat up dat bow-laigged nigger an' take he money 'way from him fo'?" he hazarded of Susie. "Us better git gwine: 'spect he done gone git de po-lice fo' you now."

"Him? *Him?*" queried Susie firmly. "Dat *my* money I take off him!"

"Y-y-yo' money?" Ipecac felt the return of fog about his mental foothills.

"Yeah, my money—whut I sont you after t'other day! How long you been gwine 'bout down heah wid dat Dinghouse boy widout gittin' hit fo' me?"

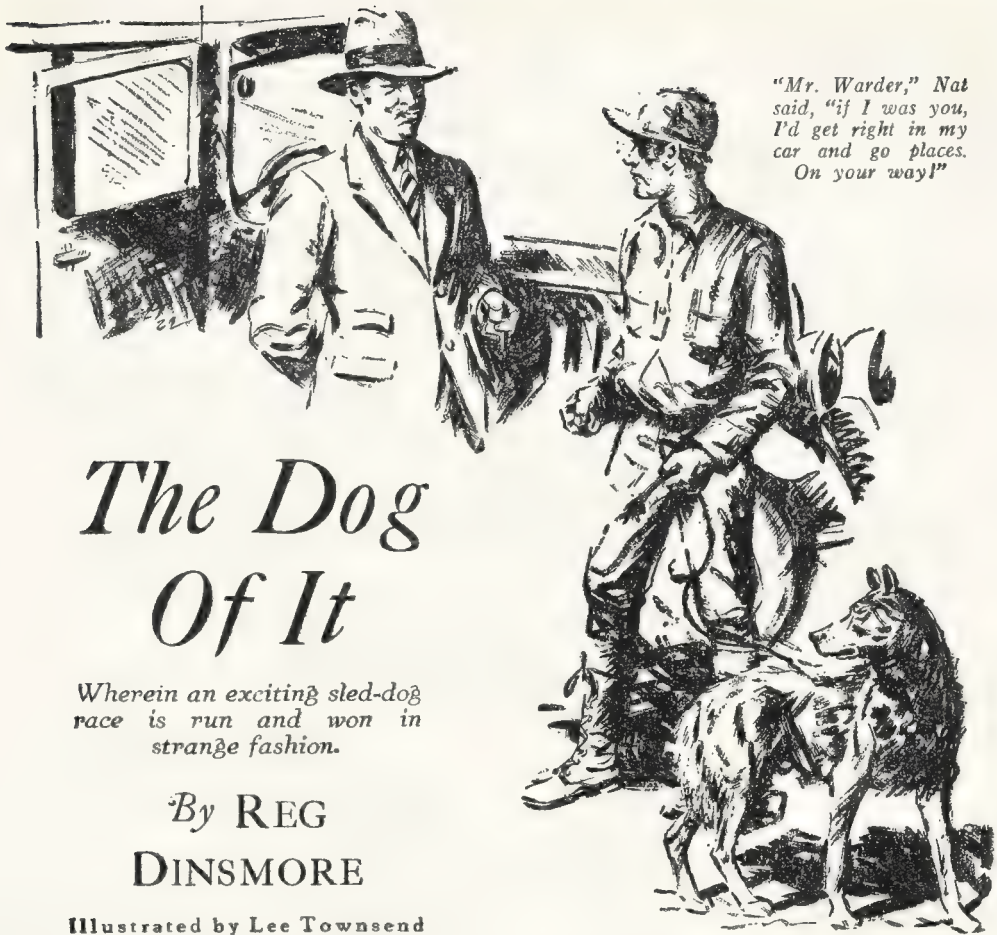
"*Dinghouse?* W-why dat wuz de one-man band—"

"'One-man band' now, maybe," retorted his larger fraction, as she clamped an uncompromising hand in the shirt-collar of her lord, "but *Dinghouse* when he w'ar dat long coat up my alley in Bumin'ham an' sell me dat bum buryin'-s'ciety sheers fo' de fifty dollars dat I jes' taken back from him!"

IPECAC'S eyelids fluttered. His troubles were far from over. Something about the firm hold of the wifely hand in his neckband told him that he was on the verge of adding contract-breaking to his list of actionable offenses. A contract still existed between himself and a big pickle-faced boy with a baseball bat. And even with half of his musical organization still whirling riverward in a cloud of dust and diminishing outcries, the bargain to exchange meals for melodies still stood.

Stood, that was, until Ginfoots himself shattered it—with a wild "*Whoop-e-e-e! Dawg-gone!*"—that stirred the rafters, and rang among them while Ginfoots rolled on his floor in excess of relief and mirth, disturbing the stars with:

"Aint *need* no bands no mo' now! Old muddyfoots collectuhs jes' carried off Henry's playin'-pianner, 'count Henry *git behind wid he 'stallment payments* on hit!"



The Dog Of It

*Wherein an exciting sled-dog
race is run and won in
strange fashion.*

By REG
DINSMORE

Illustrated by Lee Townsend

IF ever an animal had an odd disposition it was Suntar. Perhaps his mixed parentage had a lot to do with it; for, you see, his mother was a little Siberian husky, intelligent and gentle, his father a wild Alaskan wolf.

When Suntar was only a three-month-old pup a tourist bought him of a Notak River Eskimo and brought him all the way home to New York with him. Living in the city and having no place to keep a dog, he farmed the pup out with Nat Blade, a bird-dog trainer up in Maine. After a time he tired of paying the pup's board, so he wrote Nat that the dog was his, to do with as he pleased.

Incidentally that's how it happened Nat Blade got started in sled-dog racing.

In two years Suntar developed from a cunning puffball of a puppy into a big, up-standing, heavy-shouldered dog of a hundred and ten pounds. Any trapper north of Winnipeg, seeing the dog in the bush, would have taken a crack at him for a pure-bred timber wolf.

Suntar's coat was light gray and white, shading to deeper color at shoulder and rump. His eyes were set obliquely in a broad skull that sloped back from a rather fine muzzle. Lift his lip, and you'd notice that his teeth were set a bit different than a dog's. His feet were round, compact. His tail he carried low, wolf-fashion. He had muscles of steel and a sense of smell that was uncanny.

He was queer about other dogs, Suntar was: he ignored them. If they bid for a fight, his slant eyes would narrow a bit and he'd walk stiff-hinged away and go on about his business. If they jumped him, they were licked so quickly and so thoroughly that ever afterward they were mighty careful to give him a wide berth.

He followed Nat Blade into town one day, and a big bulldog sauntered out of a dooryard and, without warning, made a wicked pass at him. Somehow Suntar wasn't where the bulldog thought he was. In the next thought the half-wolf had flashed back in. There was a twisting snap

of inch-long fangs, and the bulldog, the side of his throat torn out, lay quietly down in the dust of the street and died.

That bulldog business cost Nat Blade fifty berries—but he still kept Suntar. By that anyone might have known that Nat was figuring on something later on.

ANOTHER thing about this Suntar dog—he seemed as emotionless as one of those ornamental iron dogs you see on rich folks' lawns. Give him a horse-sized licking, and he'd take it without a whimper, without a cringe. Pet him, make of him, and that greenish-yellow eye of his would never change, his drooping tail never wag. A little child could maul him, pull his ears, pry into his wicked-fanged mouth with impunity and perfect safety. Any tough-looking hobo could step right over the dog as he lay on the doorstep and walk unchallenged into Nat Blade's house. The unnatural mixture of blood in his veins seemed to have locked Suntar's feelings within him.

Nat Blade knew dogs pretty well, having trained bird-dogs since he was a kid, and he used to look at Suntar and wonder if there were anything that would stir the dog, that would bring him out of that far-away world he seemed to live in. Later Nat discovered that there was.

Having a Northern dog around as he did, Nat got interested in dog-driving. Somewhere he got hold of a lot of books on the subject, and he read all about sled-dogs and sled-dog races. He learned a lot about different kinds of sleds and harnesses and hitches. Nat was a thorough-going guy, and he made a study of this sled-dog business, you might say. The more he learned about it, the more interested he became.

The upshot of all this reading was that Nat riveted up a rough sort of harness out of some odds and ends of old straps, and began breaking Suntar.

Suntar took to it with the same fine unconcern that he did everything else, but he learned quickly enough. In no time Nat had him so he'd mind his gee's and haw's. He'd go ahead when Nat yelled "Hut!" and he'd stop at "Whoa." But when Nat hitched a light load behind the dog, he found out that Suntar wouldn't pull a pound. Nat did a lot of coaxing, and he gave the dog some pretty stiff battings, but it was no go. Suntar just wouldn't pull.

One evening Nat had him harnessed to a light block of wood, trying to get him to drag it around the dooryard. The chunk

didn't weigh ten pounds, but Suntar wouldn't drag it an inch. All he'd do was just stand there and look off across the ridges with those slant eyes of his cold as stones.

One of Nat's pigs got out. Nat went to chase it back into the pen, but before he left the dog, he hitched Suntar's traces to the crank of the grindstone so he'd be there when he got back.

By this time the pig had wandered out into the road. Nat went around it and started it back through the dooryard to its pen beneath the barn. Never having been outside a pen before, the pig felt like capering. With a "*woo-o-osh*" it streaked right past Suntar's nose.

Suntar's ears shot up. He got interested, in a mild sort of way, and went after the pig—and he took the hundred-and-fifty-pound grindstone with him!

In spite of the fact that the grindstone came out of its frame and dragged along with its rim digging deep into the grass roots, Suntar came mighty near catching that shoat before it got back to its pen.

Nat fixed the hole in the pig-pen; then he turned to the dog. "Suntar, you cheat-in' son of a gun!" he grinned. "So you *can* pull, huh? Well, you hauled that grindstone out here; now drag it back. Haw! Hut!"

Suntar swung as if he were an old-time freight-dog, humped his broad back and jerked the grindstone back across the yard. After that he never again refused to pull—*alone*. Suntar was like that: you couldn't tell when he'd change his mind.

THAT winter Nat Blade trained the dog until he'd pull like sin. Hitched to a small sled, and with a regular dog-harness that Nat bought by mail from some maker in Seattle, Suntar could start from a standstill a load of six hundred pounds. Nat weighed a hundred and forty, but on level going Suntar could whirl him along on the little sled at a breath-taking clip. Then few people in Maine had seen sled-dogs and they used to come miles just to watch Suntar perform.

One day in the early part of the next fall, Bill Corbin, a bird-hunting friend of Nat's, blowed in to Nat's place all excited. "Say, Nat," he exploded, "I just got a letter from my brother—you know, the one that's been steamboatin' outa Vancouver. He's comin' home on a vacation next month, and he's going to bring me a Si-

berian sled-dog. Now, why don't you and me get three or four more dogs and have a team, huh?

"There's half a dozen teams over in New Hampshire, so I hear. A feller down to Bangor's got a team of police dogs. Some other guy up Caribou way's got a team. There'll be sled-dog races this winter, and we might as well be in on it. That Suntar dog of yours ought to make one whale of a leader. What say?"

Nat didn't promise a thing, but a day or two later he hired a neighbor's boy to look after the bird-dogs he was boarding, and he drove away in his car.

A week later he came home, and the neighbors passed around word that Nat Blade had gone nutty, for with him he brought the whole rear end of his car full of dogs. He'd been up into Quebec and bought five of them, harnesses and all.

Some friend of Bill Corbin's had seen Nat with the dogs before he got within miles of home, and he straightway telephoned Bill about it. Bill was at Nat's when he rolled in with the menagerie. Together they admired the dogs.

"Bought 'em off a Chicoutimi trapper who'd just busted his leg and can't go out on his lines this winter," Nat explained proudly. "He needed the money worse than he did the dogs."

"Gosh, they look good!" enthused the admiring Bill. "When my Siberian gets here, we'll have *some* team, eh, Nat?"

"Sure will, Bill! This"—patting a small black dog that looked like a cross between a large spaniel and a police dog—"is Mistassini. He's a leader, the trapper said. A good one too."

"But you'll use Suntar for a leader, wont you, Nat?"

"Maybe. Le's we put these dogs into the pen with Suntar and see how they're going to get along."

SUNTAR, dozing in the warm September sunshine, paid no more attention to the other dogs when they were turned into his roomy run than if they had been so many shadows. He didn't even lift his big head from his crossed paws.

Mistassini trotted across to the wolf-dog, sniffed tentatively from a respectful distance, whined in friendly fashion and, wagging his curly tail, lay down in the shade of the kennel to rest after his long ride.

Not so the other four strangers. Saguenay huskies all, they were spoiling for a

fight. The largest of the quartet circled Suntar stiff-legged for a moment, then leaped upon him.

Suntar got up, shook 'off the dog, and walking unconcernedly away, lay down again in another corner of the yard.

Encouraged by his apparent retreat, the four Saguenay dogs followed and faced him with bared fangs.

Suntar got deliberately to his feet and stood waiting. His greenish-yellow eyes still had that far-away look in them. He seemed little perturbed by the gnashing ivory that confronted him.

Like one dog, the pack sprang.

There was a swirl of furry bodies too fast for the eye to follow. Pained yelps. The big husky, the challenger, came whirling out of the mix in an end-over-end sprawl. He struck on his back, yelled bloody murder, got up and limped away on three legs. The other three Saguenay dogs broke away as quickly as they could, tucked their tails and beat it for a far corner of the yard.

Suntar calmly shook the dust from his coat, lay down and rested his muzzle on his paws again. His eyes were as cold as ever.

"The war's all over," said Nat Blade, who knew dogs.

Bill Corbin hauled his fallen jaw back into place. "I never seen anything like that before! That Suntar aint no dog, Nat! He's a devil!"

"He's half wolf," said Nat, as if that explained it all. . . .

After giving the dogs three days to get acquainted, Bill Corbin came over again and they harnessed the team.

Suntar, who had been pulling unbelievable loads alone, now refused to tighten his traces. They tried him in every position in the team, from lead to swing, but everywhere it was the same. Not a pound would he pull.

Nat Blade didn't punish the dog. He knew it would be useless. Suntar had made up his mind not to work with these other dogs, and that was all there was to it.

Nat led him back to the kennel.

"Never mind," consoled Bill Corbin. "My Siberian will be here soon. That'll give us a six-dog team, anyhow. We'll have lots of fun this winter even if that finicky devil of a Suntar wont work. . . . Huh, you got company comin', Nat!"

A car turned into the driveway and rolled to a stop in the dooryard. A big man in an expensive knicker suit got out.

Even as he swung open the car door, his eyes were upon the dogs. He still looked at them as he introduced himself.

"Warder's my name—L. H. Warder of Merrimack County, New Hampshire. In the fur-manufacturing business over there. I heard that you have some sled-dogs, Mr. Blade. I'm in the sled-dog game a bit myself. Plan to do some racing this winter. I'm shy a dog or two. Thought I'd come over and see if you had any to sell."

Nat shook his head. "Just been buying myself. What are your dogs, Mr. Warder?"

Warder's heavy shoulders went back. He strutted a bit. "Siberian huskies—and as good as money can buy!" he bragged. "I'm out to clean up the rest of these would-be dog mushers this winter, and the Siberians are the dogs that can do it!"

The irrepressible Bill Corbin butted in: "Nat and I are going to have a Siberian in this team. I got one coming from Vancouver next week."

"That so?" Warder seemed very interested. He gazed speculatively at Bill for a moment, then dismissed the subject by saying: "Well, there's no question about it, they're great little dogs. Look what Seppala did with 'em—cleaned up in the Nome Sweepstakes three times in a row."

"By the way," continued Warder, turning back to Nat. "Some one back here in town told me you had a big dog, a wolf-Siberian cross. Where is he? I'd like to see him."

Nat led the way to the kennel. Warder looked Suntar over critically. He picked up his feet and examined them. He looked into the dog's mouth. "Want to sell him?" he asked.

"He'd be no good to you," Nat told him honestly. "He wont work with other dogs. It's the wolf in him, I guess."

Warder reached into his pocket and pulled out a roll of bank-notes big enough to trip a freight-car. He peeled off a hundred-dollar bill and shoved it into Nat's hand. Without a word he unhitched Suntar and started for his car with the dog.

Nat looked at the yellow bill. A hundred dollars didn't blow in on every breeze. He'd paid only that and half as much more for the five Quebec dogs. Besides, Suntar was going to be a white elephant on his hands if he wouldn't work in the team.

Bill Corbin caught Nat's eye and shook hands with himself behind Warder's back. Evidently he thought Nat mighty lucky to sell the dog for such a price.

Silently and thoughtfully, Nat followed Warder out to the car. Bill trailed along behind.

Warder opened the car door and slung Suntar roughly into the rear seat. "Wont work, eh, the big mutt? He'll work for me, or I'll break every damned bone in his hide! Good day, gen—" He broke off abruptly at the look that slid over Nat Blade's face.

Nat stepped forward and jammed the hundred-dollar bill into a pocket of Warder's coat. He turned and opened the car door. "Come on out, Suntar!" he said quietly. "Guess maybe you'd better stay here with me if that's the kind of a dog-driver this Warder person is."

Warder's map went purple. "That's a hell of a way to do business, Blade—backing out of a trade that way!"

Nat only stood about as high as Warder's beefy shoulder, but he walked right in close to the man and faced him as calm as a May morn. There was something about Nat's eyes just then that would make you think of Suntar's—cold, calculating.

"Mr. Warder," he said, quiet-like, "if you remember, I didn't even set a price on the dog. I don't care to sell him. Now, I don't like your shoes, your clothes, the color of your necktie, nor the way you hold your face. If I was you, I'd get right in my car and go places. On your way!"

Warder went; but as he climbed into his car, a shadow of hate crossed his face exactly as a black squall sweeps a freezing lake. He banged the door and stuck his head out the window.

"Blade, I'll make it damned hot for you if we ever get into the race together!" he threatened.

Nat never said another word—just stood there with his hand on Suntar's head and watched Warner drive away.

"Gee-gosh!" yelled Bill Corbin before Warder's car was halfway out of the doorway. "A hundred bones, Nat! For the luva Lucifer, why didn't you let him go?"

Nat was still watching Warder's car. Not until it pitched out of sight over the hill did he answer. Then, suddenly:

"Not on your life, Bill—not to be clubbed around! Suntar aint to blame because his daddy was a wild wolf!"

OCTOBER came in; and Nat, busy with city bird-hunters, who paid him well to guide them, had little time to give to the sled-dogs. In the meantime Bill Cor-

bin's brother came home and with him he brought the promised Siberian.

The dog proved to be a slim little female, creamy-white in color, affectionate, mild-eyed, and as swift as the wind. She was four years old—right in her prime; and, owing to the fact that she'd been used in the team of a British Columbia mail-carrier the winter before, she was perfectly broken. Her name was Kola.

Bill hardly waited to inquire the state of his long-absent brother's health. Instead he took Kola and hurried over to Nat's place with her.

and the cream-colored Siberian trotted a circle of the corral.

"Love at first sight!" said Nat in an awed whisper. "Suntar's found something that's woke him up! That little gyp may make a dog of him yet; who knows?"

IN the weeks that followed, Suntar was never far from the little Siberian. If he were by chance separated from her, his mournful howls soon appraised everyone in the neighborhood of the fact. Once, by accident, he got locked in the garage when Nat went to town. Kola was outside.



Suntar went after the pig—and he took the hundred-and-fifty-pound grindstone with him!

It was evening, and Nat was home. Nat and Bill admired and discussed the beautiful little Siberian. It was decided that she should stay here at Nat's to accustom her to the other dogs. They took her out and turned her into the corral.

When Kola minced through the corral gate, Suntar came to his feet. His ears shot up. For a moment he stood as immovable as stone. Then—wonders of wonders—his tail lifted and slowly began to wave!

Kola, catching sight of the big dog, stopped, eyed him closely for a moment. Her lithe body wriggled ecstatically. She took a coy step forward.

With a rush the other dogs clustered around Kola. They made friendly advances. She paid them no attention. Her eyes were riveted upon Suntar.

Mighty springs seemed suddenly loosened beneath Suntar's hide. He crossed the corral in three great bounds, and he came with a roar. The pack, recognizing the big dog's warning, fled.

Kola stood her ground, even went a step or two to meet him. The two touched noses. Suntar's tail waved again. His slant eyes glowed till even in the twilight they were like deep twin pools of golden fire. Shoulder to shoulder, the half-wolf

Suntar howled bitterly for a time, then ate a hole through the two-inch pine doors and went out to join her.

He was insanely jealous of the Saguenay huskies and their black leader Mistassini, and punished them so severely whenever they came near Kola that Nat, to save the dogs from being crippled, took Suntar and Kola out of the corral and gave them the run of the place. . . .

The woodcock flight passed; the grouse season closed; and a couple of inches of snow fell. Nat, now that his time was his own, called up Bill Corbin and told him: "Come on over in the mornin', Bill, and we'll hook up the dogs."

"This is a peach of a fox-hunting snow," says Bill. "But fox-huntin' can wait. I'll be there, you bet!"

Hoping that Suntar would work with Kola in the team, they hitched him in ahead of her, between her and Mistassini.

Suntar immediately attempted to eat the hind legs out from under the leader.

They took him out, moved Kola up a notch and put him in behind her. Before they had gone the length of the team, Suntar twisted in his traces and piled into one of the Saguenay dogs behind him, tangling the team into a raving, fighting snarl.

Nat and Bill jumped in and straightened

out the team. Nat was mightily disappointed. He ripped Suntar's harness off the dog. "You danged wolf, you wont work, and you don't plan for any of the rest of the dogs to, either! There, now go on home, or any other place you damn' well choose!"

Again they started off with the team.

Suntar proudly took a position at the left and abreast of Kola. Shoulder to shoulder with her, he loped for five miles. His long jaws were parted. His pink tongue lolled. If ever there was a smile of content and happiness on a dog's face, he was wearing it now. His tail was high, waving.

"Whoa!" suddenly yelled Nat, stepping on the sled brake. "Come haw, Mistassini! Haw!"

The leader swung. The team doubled upon itself. The sled pivoted.

"Hut!" yelled Nat, and the outfit headed back toward home.

"What's wrong?" the puzzled Bill wanted to know.

"Something, that's a cinch—with my head!" said Nat. "It's taken me five miles to puzzle out what that Suntar dog's driving at. And me monkeyin' with dogs all my life! Huh!"

"Why we headin' home, Nat?"

"To build over these harnesses."

"I know I'm dumb," panted Bill, his stubby legs flying to keep up with the team; "but I'll be jiggered if I get yer!"

"You'll see," smiled Nat. "I've got a hunch, Bill, we're going to have a *dog team*!"

UNTIL the middle of the afternoon they labored at the dog harnesses. They made "waxed-ends" of harness-maker's thread and beeswax, with which they sewed back-pads of leather to the collars of the harnesses. They rearranged the leather braces that ran from the lower part of the collar back and upward to these pads. Nat grabbed his car and made a record-time trip to town. He brought back a long piece of new rope, swivels, harness-snaps and rings. More frenzied labor. At four o'clock they again harnessed the dogs.

Now, instead of being hitched to the sled in single file, as before, the dogs were arranged in pairs. The long rope ran from the sled up the whole length of the team, passing between the dogs of each pair. Mistassini, the leader, pulled alone at its far end. The other dogs were at-

tached to it by an individual four-foot line, which ran from the main rope to a ring in the back-pad of their harnesses.

Suntar, to Kola's left, and shoulder to shoulder with her, was harnessed the first pair behind the leader.

"Mistassini!" called Nat, his eyes shining strangely. "Kola! *Suntar!* Hut! Mush!"

Suntar's mighty shoulders slammed into the collar at the word. It seemed almost as if he alone picked the team up and set it in motion. Mistassini, wiry little leader that he was, had to dig furiously to keep his lead-line taut. The four huskies behind were almost snapped off their feet, but caught the stride instantly. Kola—the little Kola who had worked this transformation in the wolf-dog, proudly matched his every stride.

Nat Blade, hanging to the handle-bars and riding the runners, leaned over Bill Corbin on the sled.

"Bill," he yelled, a funny sort of a catch in his voice. "Suntar has found his place in the world!"

BY the time winter had really set in, the Blade-Corbin team was running like a well-oiled machine. "Blade-Corbin," because although Bill Corbin had but one dog in the team, that dog was Kola, and the presence of Kola meant the superefficiency of Suntar—whose great strength and swiftness meant much.

Each day Nat Blade took the dogs for a long run over the quiet country roads, and with each day he marveled at the transformation that had come upon Suntar. The big wolf-dog seemed to have lost his strange indifference to life. Before, he had reminded Nat of a wolf caged behind invisible bars, aloof, unresponsive. Now he was a dog, all dog—cheerful, obedient, full of pep and go.

His high spirit was infectious. The rest of the team caught it. Speedy dogs all, they became whirlwinds. Their swiftness became the talk of the countryside. Even the newspapers, playing up the sport of sled-dog racing, new to the East, ran stories of Suntar the wolf-dog, and his inspiring affinity Kola. The Blade-Corbin team sprang into the public eye.

Then the racing began. Nat and his team met the team from Bangor in a fifty-mile race and beat them hands down. Nat and the dogs collected a silver cup and slathers of notoriety. Bill Corbin collected

a goodly roll of bank-notes from bets which he had quietly and judiciously placed. He insisted that Nat should take two-thirds of the winnings. Things were looking up for the Blade-Corbin combine.

Winter-sports carnivals were being held at the large towns throughout the State, and almost every carnival featured a sled-dog race. The Blade-Corbin team competed in most of the races, and won consistently. They won so frequently that Bill was obliged to give big odds to place any bets at all. In fact, their list of wins became so large that the newspapers finally referred to the Blade-Corbin team as the "State champions."

"Know what that means, don't you, Nat?" asked Bill Corbin when he read the "championship" notice.

"It means we've licked 'em all but that Aroostook potato-baron's team, and we're booked to do that next week," grinned Nat in satisfaction.

"But that aint all, Nat. It means that sooner or later we're going to get a challenge from that New Hampshire feller Warder. You wait and see if we don't! He's cleaned up about every team in his own State with them Siberians of his. We've done the same in Maine. It'll come sure as shootin'!"

"Let it," said Nat quietly. "I figger we can give any team in New England a real run for their money! Besides, I'd rather enjoy trimming that Warder. Somehow he didn't impress me favorable when he called at my place last fall."

"So I noticed!" said Bill dryly.

THOUGH there was considerable snow, the main roads were passable with a car, and Nat and Bill decided to take the dogs across country to Aroostook with a closed truck. On the trip they stopped overnight at a small town. The dogs were put in a box-stall of a livery stable, fed and bedded down with clean straw. Assured by the liveryman that they would be all right until morning, the two went to the hotel.

Sometime in the small hours the landlord pounded on the door of their room. "The liveryman just telephoned over," he told them, "that one of your dogs is howling and making a devil of a rumpus. He says for you to go over to the stable and shut him up. The neighbors can't sleep."

Nat Blade hit the floor with a thump. Before Bill Corbin got his eyes knuckled

open, he was half dressed. "Stay where you are, Bill," Nat told him. "No need of both of us goin'."

Bill was too sleepy to notice the worried tone of Nat's voice. He bored his head into his warm pillow again and went back to sleep.

NEXT think he knew, Nat was shaking him and saying over and over again in a kind of a toneless way: "Bill! Bill, Kola's gone! Bill, Kola's gone!"

"Go on 'way from here!" mumbled Bill, sleepily.

"Wake up, you bladder-head! Kola has disappeared! I've been huntin' the town from end to end for two hours, and I can't find hide nor hair of her!"

Bill was awake now. He jerked up, a wild-eyed jack-in-the-box.

"That's why Suntar was howling, Nat?"

"Sure! I knew something was wrong with Kola as soon as the landlord hollered. When I got over to the stable, Suntar was trying to take the place to pieces."

"How'd she get out, Nat?"

"She didn't *get out*, Bill. She was *taken out*. She must have been. The stall door was just as *I left it*. The outside door of the stable was closed but not locked—just as the livery-man left it when he closed the stable and went across the street to his house to go to bed."

"Stolen, huh? And us with five hundred bones on that race tomorrow!"

"Yes, and with Suntar a wolf again. He's wild, I tell you! Wild! Between you and me, Bill, I'm afraid our dog team's shot."

Bill groaned.

Four hours' search of the town and the surrounding country next morning failed to unearth the little Siberian; and sorrowfully abandoning the hunt, they rushed on to their destination.

It was useless to put Suntar into the team in his present frame of mind, so Bill took him on leash, and Nat entered the twenty-mile event with but five dogs.

For the first time the famous Blade-Corbin team tasted defeat.

Home again, Suntar once more became the taciturn hybrid. He ceased to voice his lament for the missing Kola and mourned silently. He ate but little. His eyes became bloodshot. For hours at a time he lay with his head on his paws and gazed into vacancy.

The big Saguenay husky, mistaking Sun-

tar's despondency for sickness, seized upon the opportunity to pay off old scores. Watching his chance, he sidled around and jumped the wolf-dog from behind.

Silently, mercilessly, Suntar killed him. Now with the Blade-Corbin team re-

fight. Harnessed to the right of the first husky ahead of the sled, Suntar did condescend to lope dispiritedly along, seldom tightening a trace. He seemed deaf to Nat's urging and cheering; but because Blade loved dogs, he never used a whip:



duced to five dogs, Bill Corbin's prophecy came true. Through the newspapers, Warder, the New Hampshire champion, challenged them to a race.

"Gee-gosh, what we going to do?" the worried Bill wanted to know.

"We're going to race him!" was Nat Blade's grim decision.

"What chance we got with *four* dogs against that crack team of his, Nat? Be your age, man! Suntar wont work!"

"What's the newspapers and everybody else going to say if we refuse? They're going to call us quitters, aint they? They're going to say we've arranged all this hard luck as an excuse to get out of the race. No sir, we'll race Warder if we have to do it with only one dog!"

THEN began trying days with Suntar.

Again Nat experimented with the dog in every position in the team. Nowhere would he pull, and in but one position would he run without mixing the team in a

"We're mighty lucky he'll even run with the team," Nat told Bill Corbin. "That gives us five dogs instead of four, and we wont have to change our hitch back to the old single-file style."

The enterprising little Maine town of Norway was having a winter carnival within a week. Nat got a letter from the board of trade of the place, offering a substantial cash prize to the winner of the Maine-New Hampshire sled-dog championship race, providing the finish of the race took place in their town on the big day of the carnival.

Nat was willing. Warder agreed to Norway as a finishing point, but insisted that the race should begin in New Hampshire.

Finally a compromise was arranged, and a forty-five-mile route laid out.

At a set hour Nat was to start his team from a given point and race west to the town of Bethel. Warder was to start in New Hampshire and race east a like distance to the same point. Here both teams

were to turn south along the same route, a distance of some twenty-odd miles to Norway, the finishing point.

Each team was to have a representative at the other's starting-point to follow the opposing teams in a car and see that there was fair play. The start of the race was scheduled to take place at four o'clock in the morning.

Excitement ran high in the little settlement where Nat Blade was to start his dogs. Long before the appointed hour the frost-crusted windows of every house

a score of lanterns, Nat Blade made ready his team.

The official starter, one of the Norway carnival committee, warned Nat that it was but one minute to starting-time. Warder's representative stepped forward and inspected the team, stepped back with a satisfied nod. A lane opened in the crowd before Mistassini, the leader. The starter, his eyes on his watch, pulled out a pistol and raised an arm.

Crack!

With a squeak of frosty sled shoes and



Suntar moved his team up until he was running shoulder to shoulder with a little dark dog on Warder's team.

blazed with lights. Each chimney sent a perpendicular column of blue wood-smoke climbing into the quiet air of the January dawn. In spite of the fact that the thermometer registered far below zero, men were moving about the single street, smoking, stamping their feet and slapping their mittened hands, anxious to see the get-away. Somewhere a motor started, coughed weakly from frosted cylinders and died. Warder's representative was having trouble starting his car. Nat wondered if Bill Corbin, who had gone to New Hampshire as his representative, was having the same kind of trouble.

Ten minutes of four! Nat brought his dogs from the barn where, for safety's sake, he had slept with them, and hitched them to a specially light sled that he and Bill Corbin had worked nights to complete in time for the race. The shivering men clustered around. Women, clutching shawls about their heads and shoulders, ventured out to see the start. By the yellow light of

a flurry of scratching claws, the dogs were off, while behind the crowd cheered.

AS Nat Blade ran behind the sled out into the darkness of the winter dawn, his eyes were ever on the dark shadow that was Suntar. The dog was running listlessly, his trace never taut. Suntar, with the strength of any other two dogs of the team, was loafing.

Nat called to him, coaxed him, cajoled him. It made no difference: Suntar continued to lope dispiritedly, low-headed, low-tailed, uncaring. The *verve* and enthusiasm of the other dogs seemed to stir him not in the least. Even when he slackened his pace, and the sled bumped his heels, it had little effect; he would increase his speed barely enough to keep out of its way, and that was all.

The team was making poor time, and Nat Blade knew it. The twenty miles up the valley of the Androscoggin to Bethel seemed endless.

Daylight came. The farmer folks along the road, warned by rural telephone that the team was coming, came out to watch him pass. They yelled encouragement as he trotted by. Nat waved a mittened hand in reply, but his heart was heavy. . . .

Without apparent reason Suntar sprang over the draft-rope and fell in a fury upon his trace-mate. The team piled in a snarling tangle in the roadside ditch. It took Nat ten minutes to stop the fight and again get under way. Before he got started, Warder's representative came up and sat grinning in his car. Never, that Nat Blade could remember, had he been so tempted to quit.

Out where the road crosses the intervals before reaching Bethel, a boy was waiting. He turned and ran beside Nat.

"I just came out of the village," he volunteered. "Warder and his team went through thirty minutes ago."

Nat's courage hit the bottom notch.

"How many dogs is he running?" he asked the lad.

"Seven—all black and gray Siberians. Gee, Mister, you ought to see 'em go! They went through town like scart rabbits. You'll never catch him in the world!"

Warder with seven dogs and more than a thirty-minute lead; Nat with four dogs and a piece of animated excess baggage! "Son," he said soberly, "maybe you're right; but a race is never done till the last team's across the finish line. I'm going on."

THROUGH the long covered bridge on the outskirts of town, and Nat caught sight of people that had congregated at the turn where the Warder team had come in from the west. A lane opened in the crowd. His team jogged through.

There it was that Suntar did a strange, mystifying thing.

His ears lifted. He swung as wide from the team as his trace would let him go. His muzzle went down to the snow of the roadway. For a distance of perhaps fifty feet that uncanny nose of his explored the trampled snow.

Up came his head; he sprang back into line, and with a deep-throated howl that sent the town dogs into a pandemonium of excited yapping, he fairly lifted the team ahead with a mighty lunge.

The other dogs of the team took up the slack of their traces with a leap. They too seemed to have caught Suntar's strange excitement. Out at lead, Mistassini's sharp

bark answered the wolf-dog. It was only by a quick leap to the runners that Nat Blade stayed with the team.

"Hey, see 'em go!" yelled a spectator. "They've caught the scent of the other team!"

"Whatever's happened," prayed Nat Blade to himself, as the dogs whirled him beneath the bare-branched elms of the street and out across the meadows beyond town, "here's hoping it'll last!"

Never had Nat seen the team run so well. Never had he seen Suntar use his strength as now. If the other dogs slackened on a hill, Suntar pulled the harder. Mile after mile slipped back beneath the whining sled-runners. The steam of the dogs' breath drifted back to freeze along with the moisture of his own perspiration on Nat's steaming shirt.

As he passed through a little hamlet some nine miles from the finish, some one shouted that Warder was but ten minutes ahead.

"Go it, Blade!" yelled some one else. "Remember the whole danged State of Maine is watchin' ye!"

The dogs were still running as tirelessly as machines. It was too far from the finish to call on them for a spurt. Perhaps they'd need that last burst of speed at the end. Nine miles to go, and a ten-minute handicap to overcome. If Warder's dogs should tire, if Suntar's mood should hold, perhaps there was a chance of winning yet.

Paris—two miles from the finish line.

As Nat swung his team through the square, he was aware that many people were cheering, but their voices somehow seemed faint and far-away. He sensed that some of the men were trying to tell him something, but what it was he could not understand in the roar of the crowd.

As he passed through, the mob closed in behind him. Kept back where they would not interfere with the team by uniformed officers, they followed, cheering incoherently as they ran.

Through town, across the railroad tracks—and then, ahead on the straight stretch of street that connects Paris with Norway, his goal, Nat Blade caught sight of Warder and his team.

Nat's eyes were filled with sweat. He was dizzy with exhaustion, yet he could see Warder's arm rising and falling with the regularity of a pendulum. The man was using his whip.

"Pushed his team too hard on the start,"

was Nat's swift thought. "A mile to go. Can I overtake him? Can I—" He filled his suffering lungs and called to the dogs.

"Mistassini! Moose! Scar-ear! Suntar! Get outa here! Hit it up! *Hut!*"

The team responded. Mistassini's short legs were flying like drumsticks. The three Saguenay dogs were running like deer. Suntar, now slackening the other dogs' traces with his every mighty bound, was running high-headed, and in his eagerness was crying as if a lash was biting him at every leap. The distance between the two teams lessened.

A solid bank of people lined each side of the street. The cheering was deafening. Nat could hardly hear himself as he cried to the dogs. Warder's team went out of sight around a corner into the last quarter-mile stretch.

Nat's sled slued into the turn. The handle-bars were nearly torn from his hands by the speed. Up ahead in that white-paved, human-walled lane was Warder—still plying the whip. And still farther away, three or four men stood beneath a line of flags suspended above the street; the judges at the finish line.

"Mistassini! Suntar!"

SLOWLY the gap between the two teams was closing. "The crowd was shrieking frenziedly. Factory whistles lent their hoarse voices to the din.

"Scar-ear! Moose!"

Mistassini, cagey little leader that he was, swung aside to clear Warder's team and raced alongside the opposing sled.

Only a hundred yards to the flags now; Warder was whipping cruelly.

"*Suntar!*" Nat Blade put his soul into that imploring yell. "Suntar, you wonderful devil, *dig!*"

Up, up crept the team until Mistassini was running nose and nose with Warder's leader.

Warder's heavy face was purple with effort and rage. His lash slashed wickedly among his dogs. He yelled continually, incoherently. He lifted his team into a burst of speed that for a moment held his lead.

Then Suntar, running last dog on the right of Nat's team, ceased his strange crying, and calling upon those steel muscles of his, moved his team up and up until he was running shoulder to shoulder with a little dark dog which ran to the left and just behind Warder's leader.

His burst had put Mistassini a full length ahead of Warder's leader. In this position the two teams swept across the finish line.

THEN the town went stark mad—and Warder, exhausted, collapsed on his sled.

Nat Blade broke away from the scores of people who were pawing at him and stood gulping cold air down into his burning lungs and staring at Suntar.

The big wolf-dog and the little dark Siberian of Warder's team were delightedly smelling noses. Suntar was whining thinly. His tail was waving.

Puzzled, yet with sudden suspicion growing within him, Nat Blade walked toward the two dogs. He bent over the small Siberian and parted her heavy fur.

Warder scrambled up from his sled "Get away from that dog!" he snarled.

Nat Blade faced him coolly. "You're a manufacturer of furs, I believe you told me once. Is that right?" he asked with seeming irrelevance.

"What if I am?" grated the big man.

"Nothin' much, only you'd better learn the coloring end of your business better. You didn't get the dye brushed down to the roots of Kola's fur. She's still cream-white next to her hide."

"You can't prove a damned word of that!" yelled Warder.

"I can," said Bill Corbin, elbowing his way through the crowd. "If that's Kola, there'll be a *B. C. M.* tattooed in blue ink inside her ear. A British Columbia mail-carrier owned her before I did. British Columbia Mail, see? Will some of you judges please take a look at the dog?"

A MAN stepped to the dog, glanced inside her ear, straightened up, looked hard at Warder and nodded.

"It's there!" he said succinctly.

The crowd boomed.

Warder left his team to be cared for by some of his associates and edged away.

Bill Corbin got out his jack-knife and grimly cut Kola from Warder's team.

Nat Blade went down on his knees and threw his arms around Suntar's shaggy neck. "Big boy," he whispered in the dog's happily cocked ear. "It'll take more than Warder's dye to fool that wolf nose of yours, what?"

Suntar nudged Kola lovingly with his muzzle, and his swift tongue swept Nat Blade's sweat-beaded face.

Illustrated by
J. Fleming Gould



Dragoons of the Air

By NORMAN HALL

In the spring of 1919, Merian C. Cooper, formerly a captain in the American Air Service, was in charge of all American relief work in southern Poland. There he saw the Boys' Legion of Lemberg in action against the Ukrainians. "It shamed me," he said later. "There I was a grown man, a trained pilot, dealing out flour, while those kids fought." Cooper went to Warsaw to offer his services, and there met another American pilot, Major Fauntleroy. Out of that meeting grew the idea for an American squadron to aid the Poles, which was named in honor of Kosciuszko, the Pole who helped the Americans in the Revolution. Last month you read of their first flights and battles. Here follows the stirring story, based on the log-book supplied by Captain Edward Corsi, of the savage air-fighting that followed.

IT was the second of May when Major Fauntleroy and the four men he had taken to Warsaw for the new ships, arrived in Polonne and were hailed joyously. With them came three new Balila scout planes. The Balila, an Italian product, was small, fast—it would make one hundred and fifty miles an hour on a straight-away—and had a three-hour cruising radius. This last was particularly pleasing to the Squadron, for the Albatrosses they had been flying carried but a two-hour supply of gasoline.

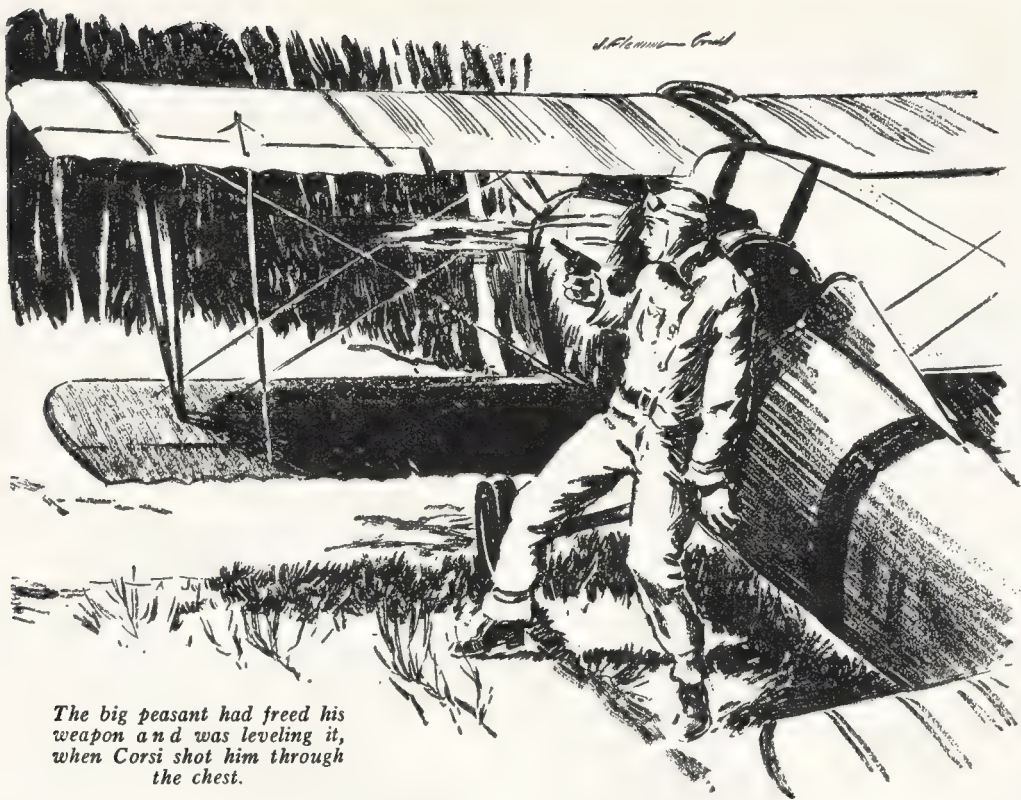
The trip to Warsaw, however, was not without its mishaps. Before taking off on the return trip Fauntleroy's detail had agreed to stop for fuel at Luck, about midway between Warsaw and Polonne. Lieu-

tenant Chess was the last of the formation to land. Immediately ahead of him was Fauntleroy, who set his ship down in the middle of the Luck field but did not taxi it to the sidelines as had the others.

As most people are aware, every landing airplane is, for a moment, "blind." That is, as the pilot approaches the ground he drops his tail, thus forcing the nose of his ship upward, cutting off his forward vision. He gets his last-second landing bearings over the side of the cockpit, left and right.

Chess, who had seen Fauntleroy bump into the field, presumed his commanding officer had taxied on to free the landing space and "set 'er down." It was a perfect three-point landing—right smack dab on top of Fauntleroy's brand new Balila! God Al-

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The big peasant had freed his weapon and was leveling it, when Corsi shot him through the chest.

mighty and a few other lesser deities must have crawled into the ship with Chess at Warsaw, for he was unhurt. While mechanics, stretcher-bearers, officers and curious peasants streaked it for the twisted mass that had been two trim airplanes, Chess arose from the wreckage wearing about his head a fragment from the upper wing of his own ship. It greatly resembled a halo.

OUT at Polonne, all was activity. The new planes were immediately flown to Berdyczew where Major Fauntleroy took command, sending Captain Cooper back to get the Squadron train under way. The hangars had been knocked down and were rapidly being stowed aboard when Captain Corsi flew in from Lemberg with his reconditioned ship which, to some extent, offset the loss of the two Balilas. He refueled and went on to Berdyczew.

This same day, May 2nd, while the entire Squadron was rapidly converging on the advanced field, Lieutenant Clark flew to Bielaja Cerkow, where the Bolsheviks had retreated after evacuating Berdyczew. The city was in an uproar. The roads west were thronged with civilian refugees while retreating Bolshevik troops choked the highways to the east.

As Clark slid down in a long dive for a closer observation, a Bolo troop-train pulled out of the station. Soldiers huddled between the cars, clung to the roofs, swung precariously from side ladders, anywhere they could find a grip or a foothold. Having no bombs, Clark strafed the retreating train with his machine-guns—saw men who were hit roll along the tops of cars like wind-blown tumbleweeds, saw others release their grip convulsively and plunge to the roadbed.

As he climbed again for position to make a third dive on the rushing, rocking train the railroad station behind him puffed out in a great black cloud. It had been mined by the Bolos.

Clark's report, coupled with information from the staff at Berdyczew that Polish troops in large numbers were advancing on Bielaja Cerkow, induced Major Fauntleroy to attempt a bit of strategy that resulted in saving many valuable flying hours. Bielaja Cerkow, he believed, would fall to the Poles within twenty-four hours. This would put the front beyond effective flying distance if the Squadron continued to base on Berdyczew. He decided to send a man forward by motor to enter the town as soon as possible and locate a flying-field.

LIEUTENANT SHREWSBURY was selected for this hazardous mission—hazardous because he might, at any time, unknowingly pass through the Polish lines into the very hands of a Bolshevik patrol. Accompanied by a chauffeur and a mechanic, Shrewsbury set out May 3rd, arriving in Bielaja Cerkow the following day. While rifle-fire still crackled on the outskirts, Shrewsbury, with the aid of a detail from a Polish infantry regiment, rounded up a party of fifty noncombatants and set them to work clearing an excellent field.

Bielaja Cerkow—the “City of White Churches”—never should have known the ruthless touch of war. Made for music and light laughter and the ways of happy folk, it should have been spared the rumbling discord of the guns, the grief of repeated siege and capture, the brutal ribaldries of men at war. Although strife had bruised, scarred it, Bielaja Cerkow was attractive.

HERE the Squadron found itself in circumstances almost ideal. The enemy was within easy striking distance. Kiev, capital of the Ukraine and the Polish goal in the east, was but eighty-five kilometers away. The field was excellent. The Squadron again was flying as a unit. Gone were the stench and squalor of the peasant warrens in which they had been living. Bielaja Cerkow with its many churches, clean, wide streets, and neat homes seemed to the Kosciuszko men a veritable Spotless Town. About five kilometers northwest of the city was Alexandryja, one of the former Czar’s most extensive Ukrainian estates, where a number of the residents of Bielaja Cerkow had served as minor officials and servants before the catastrophe of Bolshevism.

These people were charming. They had come in contact with personages of the old Russian Court. They had saluted the Cossack-guarded carriage of the ill-fated “Little Father” whose last audience chamber was a blood-blotted room in a peasant’s house at Ekaterinburg.

Yet they did not regard themselves as Russians. They were Ukrainians and, since Poland now was supporting Petlura, the Pilsudski of the Ukraine, they were most friendly to the Polish troops quartered with them and particularly so to the men of the Kosciuszko Squadron. Had not one of these odd *Americanskas* been the first to bring them hope when he flew over like a great, angry bird and chased the Bolshevik troop-train from the railroad station?

NIGHTLY the young women of the town gathered along the banks of the Ros River and sang a great, yellow moon up out of the Ukrainian forest. From their balilikas they plucked half-oriental, gypsy-like rhythms that had soft accompaniment in the whisper of breeze-stirred leaves and splashing water. From cunningly concealed hiding-places they had taken their feast-day Ukrainian costumes, colorful, barbarically gay. During the Bolshevik reign of terror these quaintly beautiful dresses had been hidden while they donned the most wretched clothing they could find, hoping that an outward appearance of squalor and filth would make them less desirable in the eyes of Bolo soldiery who, by official Soviet order, had three days in which to disport themselves as they pleased after they had captured a town.

Afternoons, these girls, who might have stepped from the pages of some romancer’s recorded dream, bathed in the Ros. Their clothing was the rippling water or the glistening sun, for in this section of the Ukraine bathing suits are as unknown as spats.

In Bielaja Cerkow, Corsi met Czura Ivaga, daughter of Professor Ivaga, who, in happier days, had been a tutor at the Alexandryja estate. Mlle. Ivaga, beautiful, talented, invited the young aviator to tea. He arrived a bit early, to be welcomed by a hostess suffused with blushes. Upon entering the living-room of her modest home Corsi understood the reason for her embarrassment. She had been mending her own shoes—pitiful wrecks of what once had been modish boots, with a piece of tough, untanned hide and wooden pegs she herself had shaped. For the remainder of the afternoon, Captain Corsi, flight commander in the Kosciuszko Squadron, pegged shoe-soles while the charming black-eyed girl who was to wear them told him almost incredible stories of Bolshevik depredations.

ALTHOUGH Bielaja Cerkow had lived in terror and dread during the months of Bolshevik occupation, it soon began to take on the light-hearted gayety that had characterized it when it knew the Czar’s favor. But the respite was short-lived. There were a few weeks of springtime happiness, then the Red Horde descended again, this time to engulf Bielaja Cerkow utterly.

May fifth, Captain Corsi was ordered to maintain *liaison* between Bielaja Cerkow and Staff Headquarters at Berdyczew, a

hazardous detail since it necessitated his taking the air daily no matter what the weather conditions. Several days later he returned from one of his Berdyczew trips through a fog that gathered about him in folds like gray cloth. Lieutenant Chess trotted out to him as he taxied to a halt. The former King's Messenger had the air of a man who bears important news.

"Senkowski's wounded," he said, but he wore a grin not in keeping with the gravity of his tidings.

"The hell he is," said Corsi.

"And Czura Ivaga is nursing him," continued Chess.

"The hell she is," said Corsi.

"And she's doing a marvelous job."

Corsi poked his moisture-beaded helmet onto the back of his head and lit a cigarette. "Chess," he complained, "I don't get the breaks. That big, grinning Pole is good—in the air or in the parlor. Why couldn't it have been a homely guy like you or Crawford?" He turned away to report his arrival but retraced his steps to remark cryptically: "Don't ever mend their shoes, Chess. It's bad luck."

Senkowski had been hit, a flesh-wound in the calf of his left leg; nothing serious, but as Corsi frequently remarked: "I never saw a man with such a little wound take so long to get well. That bird doesn't need a change of treatment—he needs a change of nurses."

To which the Squadron replied in the time-honored manner, by pursing the lips and blowing lustily through them.

THAT Crawford, as well as Senkowski, was not wounded was due to no fault of the former Lehigh full-back. Acting upon information from the Berdyczew staff that the Bolsheviks were sending substantial reinforcements to Kiev up the Dnieper River, Major Fauntleroy ordered Crawford to make a reconnaissance flight as far as Czerkasy on the Dnieper south of Kiev.

Crawford, whose unfailing courage ever seemed to be more a lazy contempt for danger than a bristling desire to go out and best it, carried no bombs. He did have tracer bullets for his machine-guns, slow-burning phosphorous ammunition that, in many instances, has proven as efficacious in destruction as incendiary bullets.

Not far south of Czerkasy, he saw that which set him to cursing softly because he had scorned to load his racks with bombs. Puffing importantly up the Dnieper was a

swag-bellied, side-wheeled steamer loaded to the gun'les with Bolo troops. A great red flag rippled out astern, another at the bow.

Repeating Noble's maneuver over the Bolshevik battery at Berdyczew, Crawford slanted his Balila into the mid-afternoon sun, hung, for a moment, high aloft while he perfected his bearings, and dived. The speed of a damned soul from the Throne to the Pit could be no faster than was Buck Crawford's attack on that troop-crowded transport.

The sun at his back shielded him from sight, the pounding of the steamer's screw and the babble of its human cargo drowned whatever screaming protest his plane made against the rushing air. The upper decks of the transport were slippery, and red as the flag they supported, with Bolo infantrymen sprawled in the horrid, frantic gestures of the dead, before any on the boat suspected there was an enemy in the air.

Some, the foolhardy brave, opened on him with rifles. On the boat deck, aft, a trio of machine-guns sang what the gunners hoped would be Crawford's swan-song. But Crawford had *viraged* out over the river bank and was up and away—safe. He whipped back and down, the tracers from his guns finding the transport like twin smoking spears.

Panic-stricken soldiers leaped from the rails in groups. Officers shouted, pushed, strove mightily to bring some kind of orderly fire to bear upon Crawford's ship. They failed. Although his plane was bullet-spattered, the motor roared appreciatively as he fed it through the throttle and made altitude for a third attack.

This time he swept upon the transport from the bow and put a long burst through the forward main deck into the hold. He was rewarded by being blown sideways and nearly overturned as the boat exploded beneath him. That hold had been cargoed with ammunition. . . .

"Buck" Crawford headed for Bielaja Cerkow, the only man in history who, single-handed, ever sank an enemy transport!

KIEV had fallen.

Polish troops under General Rydz-migli, aided by a turning movement on the part of General Listowski's left wing, surrounded the Ukrainian Capital on three sides, and after five days of furious fighting, drove the Bolsheviks so far beyond the Dnieper that the Reds found themselves out of artillery range of the city.

Kiev was as important to Poland as were the channel ports to Germany in the World War. Could the Poles but take and hold the Kiev bridgehead, all Poland and the Ukraine would be free of Bolshevik rule.

Poland, however, was not the sole possessor of this knowledge. General Brusiloff, Commander-in-Chief of the Red forces, formerly Chief of Staff of the Czar's armies, also was keenly aware of these facts. Kiev had fallen to the Reds a year before, but through the blundering and cowardice of the Commissars left there to direct military operations, it was captured by Denikin's Russian army, only again to become a Soviet prize when Denikin's army collapsed under the onslaught of Budienny.

The actual taking of the city more nearly resembled an infantry duel of the Napoleonic era than a twentieth-century combat. Here the bayonet became something more than a damnable contraption to dangle at a man's side and get between his legs. It actually took Kiev. While the infantry held it, Polish cavalry swept on beyond the Dnieper, driving the Bolsheviks so far into the heavily forested regions east that they could not shell the city with their small-caliber batteries.

In many ways the Poles are a remarkable people—evidenced by the fact that, when victorious, they did not forget to be grateful, nor did they forget to put that gratitude into tangible form. Fully aware that Crawford's sinking of the transport on the Dnieper had deprived the Bolshevik forces at Kiev of greatly needed reinforcements, General Listowski cited him for the *Virtuti Militari*, and made the citing an occasion again to compliment the Kosciuszko Squadron as a body for its contribution to the capture of Kiev.

THOROUGH and continuous reconnaissance now became the greatest need of the Poles. Their rapid advance, successful as it had been, added materially to the hazards of the campaign. The Polish Army, always outnumbered by the Bolsheviks, had, in moving forward, spread out fanwise, thus increasing by many hundreds of kilometers the extent of the front that must be covered. This of course greatly lessened the number of troops that could be concentrated at any given point, a situation that brought about their subsequent rout. Under such circumstances airplanes were indispensable.

On May 14th General Listowski ordered

Major Fauntleroy to cover Kiev with part of the Kosciuszko Squadron, holding the remainder at Bielaja Cerkow to serve his own purposes in the south. Major Fauntleroy immediately flew to Kiev, eighty-five kilometers north, where he found an excellent flying-field, heritage of Imperial Russian Air Service days, about five kilometers from the center of the city. He returned to the Squadron base—whence, the following morning, he again flew to the Ukrainian capital accompanied by Captain Corsi and Lieutenants Clark and Webber.

This same day, May 15th, Lieutenant Rorison took off to make a reconnaissance in the vicinity of Smielna, south and east of Bielaja Cerkow. "Little Rory's" flight was intended as an aid to the Poles. Actually it disorganized the entire Squadron for two days, caused the formation of an armed motor expedition, brought a Polish armored train down from Berdyczew and came perilously close to snuffing out the lives of both Rorison and Corsi.

Major Fauntleroy returned to Bielaja Cerkow as night was settling down, to learn that Rorison, hours overdue, had not been heard from. He could do nothing. Contact with units on the front was being maintained by his own planes or couriers. Better to wait for morning and put a man in the air to look for Rorison than to ask the cooperation of Polish outposts that must be reached by mounted messenger.

BEFORE the dawn fog had dispersed on the morning of May 16th, Lieutenant Crawford took off for Smielna, Rorison's objective, flying little more than tree-top high. At Smielna he was greeted with a sharp machine-gunning which he scorned to answer. To remain and strafe the Bolos would consume gasoline, and Crawford felt that he would need all his fuel to continue the search for Rorison. He found no trace of the little man either on that trip or the several succeeding flights he made that day.

Late that afternoon Captain Corsi and Lieutenant Clark flew in from Kiev to sit at a glum mess-table. The Bolos had Rory. The Squadron was certain of that!

At nine o'clock that night a bedraggled little man literally rolled off a flat-car attached to a Polish troop-train westbound from Olszanica, fifty kilometers east of Bielaja Cerkow. It was Rorison, coatless, hatless, with thorns in his hands, mud in his ears and profanity in his mouth.

The Squadron clustered about him, de-

manding information. Fauntleroy finally made himself heard above the uproar.

"Where the devil have you been, Rorison?" he asked.

For the only time in his precise military career, Rorison openly cursed his commanding officer.

"Faunt," he said, while trying to pluck a Ukrainian burr from his thatch of red

The air-pressure, of course, immediately dropped down and my motor stopped. I had almost touched the ground when the motor caught on the *nourrice*" (a fifteen-minute reserve supply of gasoline tanked in the upper wing). "I headed north with the wind, using my *nourrice* for about twelve minutes, then landed near a forest, where many Bolos ran toward the machine.



"Sometimes the Bolos were so near I could hear them talking while they searched for me."

hair, "you can go to hell till I get something to eat!"

Rorison's experience, thrilling as it had been, was but the first of several brought about by his ill-fated flight to Smielna. His story is best told in his own words as recorded in the Kosciuszko Squadron log:

"I started for Smielna by way of Ropatno, Abazanica, Mirowowka and Korsun. West of Korsun I was shot at by many Bolsheviks hidden in the forest and in ditches. I circled the town itself but found very few people. I then went to the east, where the firing was even more intense, the Bolsheviks shooting from behind trees and natural ditches, not trenches. Most of the fire was from rifles, though there were a few machine-guns.

"I dived on the place where the fire seemed thickest, when my left gun jammed and my gasoline tank was punctured. I was then only about fifty meters high.

"I ran into the forest, hid all my Polish insignia, my blouse and my papers, and lay still until night. Sometimes the Bolos were so near I could hear them talking while they searched for me.

"After dark I started walking west (I had a compass) and finally I found a little foot-bridge over a river and walked until almost midnight after losing two hours in a swamp. I stopped in a little house and got some soup, and at five in the morning resumed my walk.

"I skirted Wladislawka and Karapisze, then came to Olszanica, where I saw the first Polish soldiers I had seen since flying over the same place the day before. They arrested me, but I finally convinced the officer in charge of the troops that I was all right, and he sent me back to Bielaja Cerkow on the troop-train."

After hearing Rorison's story, Major Fauntleroy arranged with the Berdyczew

staff to send an armored train to Mirowowka, the nearest railroad point to the scene of the Lieutenant's forced landing and sixty-five kilometers from Bielaja Cerkow. From Mirowowka, Fauntleroy hoped, a patrol could be sent out to bring in Rorison's ship and return it to the Squadron base. The Squadron could not afford to lose one of its new Balilas.

At breakfast the following morning Major Fauntleroy announced his intention to send Rorison out in another plane to make contact with the patrol from the armored train, land beside his grounded Balila and assist in getting it out with as little damage as possible. Rorison was still asleep. When aroused for breakfast, he had sent a profane request that he be permitted to sleep by the calendar instead of the clock.

"Let the runt sleep," said Corsi. "I'll go get his plane."

FAUNTLEROY agreed. So long as the Balila was salvaged, he didn't care if the Bolos brought it back. But he did issue a warning.

"That's all Bolo country," he said seriously. "Get in and get out quick. Your neck's in a sling every minute you're on the ground."

Corsi buckled on a forty-five before going to the field to have a ship warmed up. He took one of the old Albatrosses. Several kilometers north of Mirowowka he dipped down for a closer look at a small party consisting of a half-troop of Polish cavalry and two *panji* wagons—springless four-wheeled carts with slatted, slanting sides, fashioned by hand in barnyards beyond the Volga—which had come, by the peculiar fortunes of war, to Poland.

The Bolsheviks, in their relentless movement westward, gathered these native conveyances by scores, by hundreds and by thousands. Miles-long columns of them followed Red armies from the shores of the Caspian to the gates of Lemberg.

In countless instances the bewildered peasants who had fashioned them in their native depths of Russia still drove them during the last invasion of Poland. Great trains of them carried Bolshevik food, ammunition and loot from the foothills of the Urals to the shadows of the spires of Warsaw. Captured by the Poles, they shrugged, muttered untranslatable dialects into their matted beards, and joined Polish transport columns—Bolshevik or Pole, it did not matter!

The two *panji*-wagons and their cavalry escort that brought Corsi earthward for closer observation proved to be a party of Polish soldiers, evidently the patrol from the armored train outward bound for Rorison's plane. Corsi circled, waved them on and continued to the forest between Kozin and Geweszli. Rorison's ship, a white spot at the edge of green, was plainly visible.

Well aware that this was enemy territory, Corsi made a careful reconnaissance of the surrounding countryside. No dust-cloud floated up dun against the forest green to betray the presence of a Bolo cavalry patrol. No shot was fired. Satisfied that a landing was entirely safe, and knowing that the Polish cavalry and *panji*-wagons would soon arrive at the plane, he bumped into the field, taxi-ing to a halt a few feet from Rorison's Balila.

As he clambered from the cockpit, Corsi experienced that peculiar sensation which tells of other presences near. Wheeling quickly, he saw a group of seven peasants approaching from the forest's edge, slowly, cautiously. Then the Captain noticed that both tires on Rorison's ship had been cut.

Resolutely he approached Rory's plane, keeping the fuselage between him and the peasants until he could tuck back his holster flap and push down the thumb safety on his automatic. A perfunctory examination of the Balila showed that there had been clumsy attempts to pry some of the instruments from their panel. When Corsi turned to his own plane, he discovered that there were but five peasants in the group which had been seven. None of the five attempted speech. They stood about eying him curiously, watching his every movement with an intentness that held something of a threat. One, a heavily built man of middle age, stood a little apart from the others, his great hands stuffed into the wide, flowing sleeves of his dirty linen *rubashka*.

Once he turned quickly, and Corsi had an explanation for the rigidly folded arms. One of the voluminous *rubashka* sleeves blew back, disclosing the butt of a sawed-off shotgun, favorite weapon of Bolshevik peasants. Thoroughly alarmed, but realizing that the slightest sign of weakness might mean his death, the Captain decided to take off and land again when the Polish cavalry detachment had arrived.

He had placed one foot upon the wing step, was reaching in to his instrument board, when from the narrow road that skirted the outer edge of the field behind

him there came a sudden dust-deadened thud of hoofs, a shout and a spatter of rifle-fire that splashed bullets into the fuselage at his side. He knew, now, where those other two peasants had gone!

Fearing that sawed-off shotgun more than the carbines of the Bolshevik cavalymen, for such he correctly surmised the shooting horsemen to be, he slid sidewise to the ground, rolling under the plane and drawing his automatic as he rolled. The big peasant had freed his blunt weapon, was leveling it when Corsi shot him through the chest, spinning him sideways against the others. He scrambled to his feet, firing several shots into the group as he made for the forest that, the day before, had saved Rorison's life. At least one of his bullets took effect, for a second dead peasant was found beside the planes later.

Convinced that, to live, he must get to the *panji*-wagons and their cavalry escort, the Captain began a fevered dash through the woods in a direction he believed would bring him out on the narrow road at a point considerably below the place where the Bolo cavalry detachment had turned off to fire upon him. As he formulated this plan and worked deeper into the forest, the sustained clatter of machine-gun fire in his rear led him to believe that the *panji*-wagon detail had arrived. Retracing his steps, he cautiously crawled to the edge of timber.

The *panji*-wagons, each with a machine-gun mounted on its seat, had turned off the road and halted beside the planes. The cavalry was not in sight, nor were any of the Bolos. Boldly, now, Corsi approached the drivers, who regarded him apathetically. They pointed over a slight knoll, where rifle-shots echoed in diminishing rapidity.

A QUARTER-HOUR later the Polish cavalry trotted back. Their commanding officer, a young lieutenant, who, fortunately, spoke excellent French, addressed Corsi soberly. They had seen his circling reconnaissance, had watched him dip down below their line of vision and had hurried on to join him. The Bolsheviks' ragged volley had increased their comfortable trot to a plunging charge, the surprise and force of which had driven the score of Bolos from the scene. There had been but one casualty on the Polish side, a trooper shot through the shoulder. The Bolos had not fared so well. Between the planes lay the two peasants Corsi had killed, while the

young lieutenant proudly announced that his men had killed four more beyond the knoll.

Gravely the cavalry officer urged Corsi to start for the railroad immediately. He explained that he had been sent on from Olszanica the night before to pick up Rorison's plane and return it with all despatch to Mirowowka, where it would be put aboard an armored train. He said that the surrounding country teemed with Bolshevik soldiery, that Mirowowka probably would be occupied that night. He also called attention to the fact that they now were fourteen kilometers from the town, and that much deeper in enemy territory.

While the Pole had been urging haste, Corsi made the disheartening discovery that a Bolo bullet had smashed his gasoline, rendering his plane as useless as Rorison's. Reluctantly the flyer explained this new misfortune to the young lieutenant.

"Then we will leave the airplanes here and return to Mirowowka immediately," announced the cavalry officer.

Corsi would do nothing of the kind. He had come out to get Rorison's Balila, not to deposit an Albatross beside it. They argued, heatedly, profanely. Corsi won.

"He was only a kid," said Corsi afterward, speaking from his mature age of twenty-two. "He really thought we all would be cut up before we got back."

HAVING agreed to transport the two planes to Mirowowka, the Pole demanded to be informed how it should be done, since the wing-spread of either ship was wider than the narrow road which, for many kilometers, ran through thick timber that marched down to bare wagon width. A sense of failure overcame the flyer. It looked, now, as if he would have to leave two ships to become Bolshevik prizes. But he could salvage the motors, at least.

"Chop off the wings," he finally ordered, experiencing feelings akin to those that must have moved General Robert E. Lee when he ordered the burning of Richmond.

This they did, whittling the ships down to the fuselages, and lashing the mutilated wings atop. To the rear of each *panji*-wagon they roped the tail of an airplane. Before they pulled away from the field Corsi, indicating the bodies of the dead peasants, asked: "What about them?"

The Pole shrugged. "*Ce soir les loups les enterrent* (Tonight the wolves will bury them)," he said.

With the meager cavalry escort riding front and rear and, whenever possible, on the flanks, the grotesque cavalcade set out for Mirowowka.

"I'll never forget that trip," the Kosciuszko flyer declared later. "Time after time one of the planes would slip from its lashings, necessitating further delay while we tied it back on the wagon. I never realized before that trees can cause fear. Night came and, sometimes, I felt as though we weren't moving at all, that it was the trees that were marching past us, swallowing us deeper in the forest. And any minute more of those damned Bolos might swoop down upon us. No more for mine, thanks. I'll take air under my wheels every time."

Eight days of comparatively unimportant flying followed, on two of which the entire Squadron was down because there was no petrol at Bielaja Cerkow.

It was on one of these days that Captain Cooper resisted all the wiles of Bolshevism. Returning late one afternoon from a jaunt about the town, he found the entire Squadron grouped about the mess-table, arguing heatedly. In the center of the table were several large stacks of one-thousand- and five-hundred-ruble Bolshevik notes. As Cooper entered, the others fell silent.

"Who stuck up the bank?" the Captain inquired.

After a moment during which the flyers eyed each other, Chess explained.

"I was just leaving the field to come over here for supper," he said, "when a boy about fifteen years old ran out, stuffed a sack into my hands and offered this note." Chess indicated a folded paper beside the money. "Then he darted away between two houses. Webber will tell you what's in the note. He just translated it."

Lieutenant Webber flipped another piece of paper toward Cooper. On it the Captain read:

To the American pilots of the Kosciuszko Squadron:

Say nothing! Stop flying! There is more of this to come.

It was signed, "*Brusiloff, Commander-in-Chief.*"

Cooper perused the translation twice before raising his eyes. "How much money is there in that pile?" he asked quietly.

"About four million rubles," some one informed him.

"And what are you going to do about it?" Cooper demanded.

The others exchanged glances.

"We're going to keep it, divvy it up, and fly just the same," Crawford declared.

"Look here," argued Cooper, with the patient exasperation of one explaining a very simple matter to a very small child, "if we take this money, eventually it will be known, and though we keep on flying, nobody will ever believe that we did not sell out to the Bolsheviks. Why, the thing is impossible—it can't be done!"

"Oh, don't be an old woman, Coop," Crawford said.

Cooper exploded. "Old woman!" he shouted. "*Old woman!* Why, I'm the only man among you!" He wheeled on Crawford. "Buck, I thought you were a friend of mine, but not if you go in on a deal like this. And you Poles!" He bent a hard eye on Webber, Senkowski and Konopka, grouped at the end of the table. "What the hell are you thinking of to pull a stunt like this? If you birds need money so damned bad, I'll give you all I've got, but you can't take this stuff! By God, before I'll let you do it I'll shoot every—"

As Cooper's hand shot down for his automatic, Crawford tackled him, Corsi jumped in and wrenched the gun from the enraged Captain's fingers. Cooper, furious, fighting mad, trying to punch his way out of Crawford's bearlike embrace, realized that the Squadron men were howling with laughter. When he ceased to sputter, they all began to explain at once.

The four million rubles had been taken from a Jewish Bolshevik propagandist captured by several Polish officers near the building which housed the Squadron mess. They had brought the money to the Kosciuszko officers, requesting that it be guarded until they received instructions for its disposal from the staff at Berdyczew. Lieutenant Webber had written the note purporting to come from Brusiloff, Commander-in-Chief of the Red Army. Chess' story of the boy was, of course, pure fiction.

Cooper took it good-naturedly enough, but until his capture by Budienny's cavalry, they did not let him forget it. Times without number when he was about to climb into his ship some one would run up to him, wave a Russian note and yell:

"Here's another from Brusiloff, Coop. Better not fly today."

UNTIL May 27th the Squadron utilized a most welcome period of comparative inactivity to make greatly needed repairs. Naturally the Kosciuszko men continued



From volumes that money could not have purchased, leaves were torn to serve as pipe-lights.

the usual reconnaissance flights, occasionally interspersing them with a single plane bombing raid or a machine-gunning of some Bolshevik cavalry detachment, activities that the Americans had come to regard as routine.

Operations of an important nature were not resumed until May 27th, when Lieutenant Chess, without assistance, cleared Karapisze of Bolshevik cavalry that had moved up from Mirowowka under cover of darkness. Chess left Bielaja Cerkow at six in the morning, passing over Karapisze twenty minutes later. The hour and the degree of activity in the town were not in keeping.

Holding his eastward course, the Lieutenant dipped sharply, observing many Bolshevik troops and a large number of riderless horses in an open space before the village's single church. Ere he could maneuver into a more advantageous attack position most of the troops found shelter. Reluctant to turn his guns upon the horses when, by a bit of strategy, he might later make the riders his targets, Chess continued eastward. While still certain that his course was being followed by the Bolos in Karapisze, he veered to the south, swung in a wide, slow circle that brought

him again upon the town, this time from the northeast.

A slight change in direction allowed him to turn his machine-guns upon the wide, main street of the village, now dotted with groups of dismounted soldiers. Not expecting an enemy from their rear, the Bolsheviks offered little or no resistance to his first attack. But the second time he swooped down he saw his wing fabrics part in long rents to let Bolo bullets through.

Prolonging his dive, he saw a group carrying two machine-guns take shelter behind what he at first believed was a monument at the junction of the principal street and the opening to the square in front of the church. As the quick firers swung up into line with his ship he realized that what he had assumed was a monument was a shrine, larger and more elaborate than most of the village and roadside crosses so numerous in the Ukraine. The gun crews were sheltered behind the base, the muzzles of the guns protruding above at the foot of the cross.

"Call it religious superstition or what you will," said Lieutenant Chess in describing the incident later. "It matters little what name you give it, but the fact remains that I *ceased firing!* It all was

instantaneous, of course. I recognized the machine-gunners' shelter as a shrine."

"What did you do?" he was asked.

The Texan who had been a King's Messenger smiled grimly. "I went into a sharp left *virage*," he explained, "diving again from an angle that deprived those machine-gunners of any protection from the cross."

"And?" Again his listeners prompted.

Chess avoided their gaze. "I left them there," he said.

Chess' second onslaught at the shrine had brought him down within range of every Bolo rifle in the town. Fortunately none of the many bullets that registered on his plane struck a vital part. Although the ship rapidly was becoming unairworthy, he was able to climb for a last attack. But the Bolsheviks had had enough. As he roared away, the uninjured mounted their rearing, plunging horses and galloped east, leaving the road for the cover of the forest beyond the town. Chess came back to empty his guns into the unbroken green before returning to Bielaja-Cerkow.

May 27th was a day of sustained activity for the Kosciuszko Squadron. Lieutenants Senkowski and Shrewsbury, on separate flights, bombed Bolo *panji*-wagon transports beyond the Dnieper, while Lieutenants Webber and Chess spent the afternoon flying southeast of Bielaja Cerkow, machine-gunning Bolo cavalry. On this flight Lieutenant Webber suffered a forced landing which nearly cost him his life. He crashed on a rocky hillside and was rendered unconscious. When he revived some time later he began a slow, painful cross-country trek that eventually brought him to Bielaja Cerkow, where he received hospital treatment for severe cuts about the head and shoulders. Having fallen behind his own lines, his plane was later salvaged.

LATE in the afternoon Captain Corsi and Lieutenant Clark flew up to Kiev to join Captain Cooper, who had been sent up two days previously.

Kiev! Once the artistic and educational center of Russia, it had become a charnel city! Under Bolshevik rule its magnificent public buildings had become dwellings of the damned where those who, by birth, by position, by act or by word, had offended the overlords of the Soviets were herded as no cattle ever have been, to await violation, torture or death—frequently all three.

In Kiev stands the Pecherski Monastery,

said to have been founded by St. Anthony in the Ninth Century. Before the war over two hundred thousand pilgrims yearly visited this greatest of Russian shrines. During the Bolshevik occupation the altars of Pecherski were defiled by Red soldiers; its catacombs, in which many venerated Russians were buried, were wantonly ripped asunder. The University, founded in 1834 by Nicholas I, was thrown open to serve as barracks for Chinese and Lettish mercenaries, lured to the slaughter of aristocrats by promises of immeasurable loot in bodies and gold. The library, perhaps the finest in all Russia, had housed Bolshevik cavalry. From volumes that money could not have purchased, leaves were torn to stop bullet-holes in stained-glass windows or to serve as pipe-lights.

When Cooper, Corsi and Clark applied to the Polish military authorities for quarters, they were given a great list of single dwellings, apartments, even hotels. "You may take any of these you like," said the city commandant.

Investigation disclosed that they liked but few of them. These were the homes of the more than one hundred thousand victims that, in Kiev alone, had either been murdered or driven from the city by the Bolsheviks. The walls were blood-spattered, bullet-gouged. What furniture remained would have been scorned by the most poverty-stricken tenement dweller. Beautiful hand-carved specimens that would have been museum pieces in another land lay in fragments about the floor, smashed for sheer, wanton destruction. Tapestries hung in shreds. Frames that had encompassed Rembrandts, Murillos and Verestchagins, hung blankly empty where the precious canvases had been ripped from them. In no dwelling the Kosciuszko men inspected were the windows intact.

Finally settled in a commodious apartment that displayed less signs of bloodshed and strife than others they had visited, the Kosciuszko men began a daily program of reconnaissance patrols and bombing raids that frequently took them far into Russia.

On May 28th, Captains Cooper and Corsi with Lieutenant Clark joined a formation of seven Brequet planes flown by a Polish squadron sent down from the north to support General Rydzmigil. The ten machines flew down the Dnieper to Czerkasy, where they bombed a Bolshevik

fleet of three small steamers, two barges and one armored monitor.

That afternoon Captain Jankowski took Corsi to a large, comparatively modern building in the Podol, once the exclusively mercantile quarter of Kiev. The place was heavily guarded by Polish troops.

"Here," said Captain Jankowski, "was the headquarters of the Cheka in Kiev."

The building appeared harmless enough from the outside. Within, it resembled nothing that Corsi ever had seen before, not even in the war-ravaged villages of France. On one side of the entrance all the partitions had been knocked out to form one great room. But for a narrow corridor this space was partitioned laterally with wooden bars about an inch apart running from floor to ceiling.

Into this space, Captain Jankowski explained, the Bolsheviks frequently thrust as many as one hundred and fifty men, women and children awaiting "trial." "Court" was held in a spacious room across the corridor. At first, the firing-squad operated in the cellar, until the soldiers complained of discomfort because of confined powder-smoke.

"Do not think because we hold the city that the Cheka is vanquished," Captain Jankowski continued. "Far from it. Your scrubwoman unquestionably is one of its agents. The cripple who begs a kopek is probably another. You will see ample proof of this before you have been long in Kiev."

Corsi and the other Kosciuszko men did have proof that the Cheka, or some other Bolshevik agency, was active in the captured city. Nightly, Polish officers and men were mysteriously slain while walking along little-frequented streets. The Red Army might be gone, but the Cheka remained. The people knew it, sensed it, and, so great was their fear, they would say nothing in public condemnatory of the Bolshevik régime.

IF May 28th was a thrilling day for the Kosciuszko men in Kiev, it was no less so for the Squadron at Bielaja Cerkow. Early in the morning, Lieutenant Chess flew southeast to Tarascza, forty-five kilometers away. He returned with the startling information that the Polish outposts were falling back and the Bolsheviks advancing steadily. Little more than an hour later Major Fauntleroy received orders from the staff at Berdyczew to evacuate Bielaja Cerkow. The retreat that was to

end at Lemberg, with but two members of the Kosciuszko Squadron left to fly in a last heartbreaking attempt to stem the horde, had begun.

The ground-crews were immediately put to work striking the Bessanan demountable hangars; small parts and ammunition were loaded aboard the Squadron train. During the afternoon Lieutenant Webber appeared, swathed in bandages above the chest. Unable to fly or be of other service, he was placed in command of the train. May 29th the Squadron evacuated Bielaja Cerkow for Kazatin.

Cooper, Corsi and Clark remained in Kiev, flying down the Dnieper daily to bomb and machine-gun Bolshevik transports in the vicinity of Czerkasy, still a concentration point for Red troops. As reports of a great massing of Bolshevik forces beyond the Dnieper were spread throughout the Ukrainian capital, the exodus of civilians westward increased. They formed an army in themselves, a useless, helpless army that interfered with troop movements and very nearly brought about the annihilation of General Rydzmigli's forces. Captain Cooper gives a most illuminating description of the pathetic desire of these people to secure sufficient money for their flight into Poland.

"It seemed to me," he said, "as if everyone was trying to acquire enough money to get out of the city. No bazaar of the East ever presented a stranger sight than the marketplace at Kiev. You could buy what you would. Here Jewish bread-vendors and diamond-merchants mixed with former nobles, artists and professors, leaders of society and peasants; old men, young men, women and children milled about, each with something to sell. Usually it was some little treasure hidden away during the Red régime.

"Diamonds, furs, bits of sticky candy, magnificently carved gold and ivory chess-sets, paintings, broken-down peasant boots were hauled about by the jostling peddlers. When the selling prices of even the most valuable of these things were translated into American money, the result was one that would have made the heart of an art collector pound with joy."

CAPTAIN COOPER had a very narrow escape from death on May 30th. While attacking Bolshevik transports below Czerkasy, a burst of machine-gun fire from one of the boats swept away most of the

support wires between his upper and lower left wings. Although his ship was in a most unairworthy condition he remained with Corsi and Clark until they had expended their ammunition, when all three returned to Kiev. Cooper's damaged left wing kept pulling his ship into a side-slip that momentarily threatened to become a tail-spin from which he could not have recovered. He landed safely at the Kiev 'drome to find that his plane was so badly damaged that it would not take the air again.

As the Kosciuszko men taxied in from this flight a gray-bearded, little man strolled out to their ships. It was "Jimmy" Hare, the world's most famous war photographer. Although nearing seventy, this remarkable man had made the journey from Lemberg in a freight-car to obtain pictures of the Poles in action at Kiev. With him had come George Witte of the *Chicago Daily News* and Arno Dosch-Fleurot of the *New York World*. That night the correspondents dined the flyers on steak and champagne, almost forgotten luxuries to the war-birds. At this time their salary, including flying pay, was equivalent to about seven dollars a month, American money.

To Dosch-Fleurot Captain Corsi said:

"Why don't you send back the real story of the situation here? You wouldn't believe that human beings could do some of the things the Bolos did."

The correspondent shrugged. "What would be the use?" he countered. "My paper would not print the story if I did send it back, and there are but few people in America who would believe the yarn if it was printed."

On June first the Kosciuszko Squadron suffered the loss of one of its bravest and most efficient pilots, Lieutenant Clark. Many times in the weeks that followed some one in the Squadron was heard to say:

"If we only had Clarkie with us, now."

A cold, which he had neglected, rapidly became worse, resulting in a severe attack of pneumonia from which he did not fully recover until months after the war was over. Lieutenant Clark was sent back to Warsaw with a trainload of Polish soldiers who had been wounded in the outpost fighting beyond the Dnieper. When he was convalescent he received the personal praise of Marshal Pilsudski and the coveted *Virtuti Militari* for his repeated fearless attacks on Bolshevik cavalry patrols.

CAPTAIN COOPER, using Clark's plane, and Captain Corsi again joined the Brequet formation under Major Kossowski for a dawn attack on a Bolshevik massed battery of twenty guns at Dimietrke, not far from Czerkasy. The guns, a long line of them, had been emplaced at the edge of a patch of timber. Flying low and in single file, the Polish Squadron planted its bombs with disastrous precision. At least four of the guns were seen to be completely dismantled before the flyers turned back.

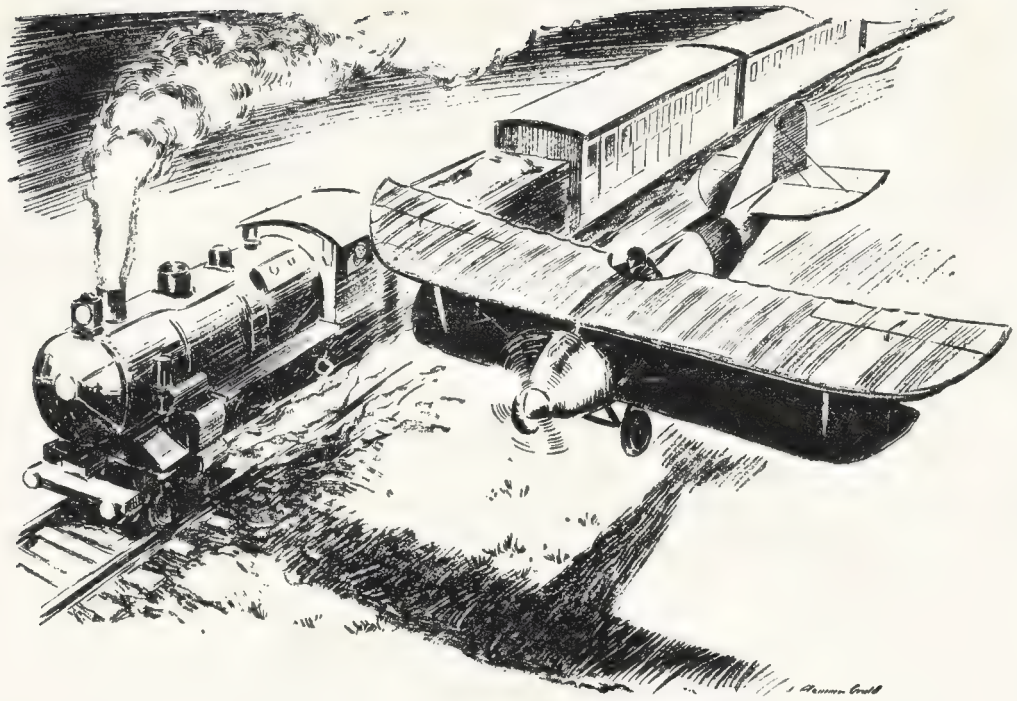
This same day, June first, Captain Corsi, alone, put a Bolshevik armored train out of action. After participating in the bombing of the massed battery, the Kosciuszko captain returned to Kiev to refuel, where Major Kossowski requested him and Captain Cooper to assist in another patrol beyond the Dnieper. Cooper did not get off the field. His motor failed as he was taking off and he nosed over, suffering minor injuries and seriously damaging the plane.

Corsi accompanied the Brequet formation over the Bolo lines but did not return with it. He still had more than an hour's supply of fuel when the Squadron turned for home. And he had not used his two bombs. Swinging in a wide circle he headed back toward the city, following the Kiev-Moscow railroad.

At Borislaw, about twenty-five kilometers east of the Ukrainian capital, he came upon a Bolshevik armored train proceeding slowly toward the Dnieper. In a beautiful, roaring dive that carried him within fifty meters of the ground, he loosed one of his bombs, placing it squarely on the track behind the train. It blew out a great section of the roadbed, rendering the withdrawal of the train impossible until there had been a major repair job on the right of way.

A few minutes later he repeated the maneuver in front of the train. He came down at whistling speed, head on to the locomotive, using the train itself to shield him from the three-inch rifles and machine-guns it carried. Skidding along in a sustained vertical bank, he strafed the steel cars, hoping that some of his bullets might take effect through loopholes and fire-slits. Then he sped back to Kiev to inform the Polish staff of his exploit.

PROTECTED by a large cavalry detail, Polish engineer troops were hurried to the scene. They found the train deserted. So hurried had been the flight of the Red



crew that they had not taken time to render the armament of the train useless. A few hours later the track that had been ripped out by Corsi's second bomb was repaired and the armored train triumphantly driven into Kiev, a one-man prize.

A third time that day Corsi and Cooper took the air, Cooper flying a plane borrowed from Major Kossowski's squadron. Forty kilometers north of the city they found half a regiment of Bolo infantry feverishly at work on a large pontoon bridge across the Dnieper. They cleared the banks of the river and the uncompleted bridge with machine-gun fire, then bombed the structure to kindling wood.

THAT night a very courteous and respectful Polish staff officer waited on them at their quarters.

"General Rydzmigli orders me to inform you," he said in clipped English, "that an hour ago our signal troops intercepted a Bolshevik radio message from Brusiloff, the Bolshevik commander-in-chief, to General Tuchachevsky, commanding in this sector, that one million rubles reward will be paid to any Bolshevik soldier or unit who captures one of the American aviators of the Kosciuszko Squadron dead or alive."

The two flyers were incredulous. "D'ye mean that?" they demanded.

The Pole stiffened. "I told you the information comes from General Rydzmigli," he said curtly.

Bolshevik cavalry were mining the railroad ahead. Fauntleroy saw that his frantic signals were finally understood by the engineer of the Polish troop train. The train ground to a halt.

They thanked him and, when he had departed, grinned at each other.

"Looks like the bunch was getting known in the Ukraine," said Cooper.

"Yeah," agreed Corsi, "and it looks like none of us want to crack up in Bololand, too."

They were proud of themselves, of their Squadron, and went off to the *Café des Artistes* in a most comfortable frame of mind. If this kept up, they thought, victory, lasting victory, could not be far away. Two days later this two-man outpost of the Kosciuszko Squadron was in full retreat to Kazatin, the new base! They never saw Kiev again.

Captain Cooper had wired Major Fauntleroy for a new plane and, if possible, for more pilots. The Major's reply was:

"Poles retreating all along line. Imperative you return at once."

Shocked, not quite comprehending, for this was the first intimation they had had that all was not well with the Poles, Cooper and Corsi quit Kiev that afternoon, June 3rd, for Kazatin, where they found a sorely harassed Squadron striving to maintain a schedule of flying operations that would have been arduous had twice the number of men and ships been available

AGAIN the Horde had come out of the East!

Mongol and tartar tribesmen, Cossack and Lett irregular cavalry, Turcoman bandits and Chinese cutthroats, with men of the nameless breeds that spawn in the hills between the Black and the Caspian, were riding westward to raid once more. Splendidly mounted, perfectly equipped, they swept unhindered over the eastern edge of the Ukraine, confident of victory because they were led by one, who, until this campaign, ever had been victorious—Budienny!

Budienny was by far the best of the Bolshevik generals. That he was one of the great cavalry leaders of modern times is not denied; courage of a sort he must have possessed, and an appreciation of it in others—else he would have ordered Cooper to his death when that luckless flyer became a prisoner of the Reds and saw the dungeons of the Soviet prison in Moscow, which, like Devil's Island, has given but few of its unfortunates back to the world.

The Soviets knew Budienny's worth well. Determined to dominate the Ukraine by recapturing Kiev, its capital, then loose their victorious armies on Lemberg and Warsaw, the Red strategists summoned Budienny to the command of the southern Front. Out of far-away Caucasia he came with his horde of forty thousand.

Bear in mind, please, that this was in no sense a "Russian" Army. It was a force built around an idea, a horde that welcomed to its ranks any man, black, white or brindled. Its nucleus was Budienny's own Cossacks who the previous winter had driven Denikin's South Russian Army into the Crimea, sabered it into hopelessly sundered detachments and then fattened on the spoils. When this horde again took the field it was better equipped than the campaign-exhausted Poles, its horses and its men traveled well-fed, its *panji*-wagon transports bulged with ammunition.

Late in May this formidable force rolled up from the southeast sweeping everything before it. It paused only to feed itself and rest. It did not sacrifice numerical strength to garrison captured towns; after it had passed there was little left to garrison! The Poles retreated. By June first, when members of the Kosciuszko Squadron, operating from Kazatin, had definitely located and identified Budienny's columns northwest of Uman, the retiring movement had become general.

Poland's armies had halted at the Dnie-

per because of the High Command's reluctance to extend the already tremendously long fighting line, a maneuver that would have necessitated a still greater dispersion of troops. This unwelcome but unavoidable situation gave Brusiloff a greatly needed opportunity to reorganize his combat divisions and to consolidate the large infantry reinforcements that had been moving slowly westward since the breaking up of winter, with Budienny's rapidly advancing cavalry from the south.

There had been no decisive action east of the Dnieper. By the latter part of May, the Soviet troops were able to push the few Polish patrols that had crossed the river beyond the west bank. With the exception of the Kiev bridgehead the Reds had penetrated far into the Ukraine by May 30th.

This 30th day of May is a Memorial Day to the members of the Kosciuszko Squadron who were at Kazatin. The day's flights had been completed and the pilots were gathered in the officers' mess, a considerable distance from the field, when a Bolshevik bombing-plane—the first any of them had seen since arriving in Poland—flew over the town at three thousand meters and dropped four bombs, one working dreadful havoc among Polish infantry camped on the outskirts of the town.

Tumbling into an automobile, Major Fauntleroy, Lieutenants Chess, Shrewsbury and Rorison, sped to the field and were in the air as soon as their planes could be prepared. But there was no sign of the enemy bomber. Disgruntled and more than a little chagrined, they returned to their cold supper, telling each other what they would have done had they succeeded in locating the Red raider. They never did, because he never returned; but the incident is not a popular one with the Kosciuszko pilots who participated in it.

THE following day Major Fauntleroy, making a dawn flight for the Polish commanding officer at Kazatin, found Budienny's rapidly moving main column approaching Lipowicz, fifty kilometers southeast. At this time Kazatin was headquarters for the 13th Polish Division, formerly the First Division of General Haller's famous World War contingent, including thousands of Polish-Americans, many of them recruited from Chicago and environs.

They served valiantly in France; they fought nobly in Poland, particularly about Kazatin, which they held for days after

Budienny had all but surrounded it. Their armament included a number of small Renault tanks which they continued to operate against the Horde with superb courage until the sheer weight of numbers forced their retirement.

General Pachncki, then commanding the Division while General Haller was operating against the Bolsheviks in the region of the Bereszina, requested Major Fauntleroy to establish communication with a brigade that, for two days, had been cut off near Lipowiec. After a two-hour flight the Major located the brigade's headquarters, dropping a message-tube containing a map locating Budienny's approximate position and orders to hold him at all costs. This the lost brigade succeeded in doing for a precious forty-eight hours.

LATE that afternoon, May 31st, Major Fauntleroy, on his third prolonged flight of the day, accomplished an amazing feat which was to number him among those who wore the *Virtuti Militari*.

Far to the northeast of Kazatin, the Major discovered a large body of Bolshevik cavalry that had broken through the Polish line. They were mining the railroad being used to transport troops to southern concentration points.

Several kilometers to the north, Fauntleroy saw a train approaching rapidly. A long dive, a swift, short circling movement, brought him the information that it was a Polish troop-train. With a series of maneuvers, during which he all but scraped his wings against the sides of the locomotive, Fauntleroy finally saw that his frantic signals were understood by the engineer. The train ground to a halt. The Major effected a precarious landing in a near-by field, running back to the train to inform the troop commander of the danger ahead.

The flyer waited until the train had backed down to the shelter of heavy timber, where the troops were detrained and posted through the woods, before he again took the air, following the track to the Bolo troops. He dropped both bombs, one of which, unfortunately, detonated the mine-charge in addition to inflicting heavy casualties among the Red soldiers. Fauntleroy remained to strafe the Bolos to the limit of his magazines before returning to the train with the information that, although the raiding party had been dispersed, a number of hours would be lost until the track was repaired.

FOR three days Fauntleroy, Chess, Shrewsbury and Rorison kept planes over the advancing Bolshevik cavalry from dawn till dusk. Operations were seriously handicapped by lack of pilots.

By June 3rd it was apparent that Kazatin no longer was tenable as a base for flying operations. Both flight commanders, Captains Cooper and Corsi, flew in from Kiev, but even this addition to the number of pilots did not alter the necessity of continuing the Squadron retreat. Consequently, Major Fauntleroy evacuated the town for Berdyczew, leaving Corsi and Chess as aerial scouts for the staff of Haller's Division.

On the down flight from Kiev, Captain Corsi had swung far south of the direct line of flight intending to land at Bielaja Cerkow and warn Czura Ivaga of the advancing Bolos. He was less than one hundred meters above the Squadron's former field when, to his utter amazement, he realized that the troops swarming across the level surface were not Poles but Bolsheviks! He knew, of course, that the Squadron had quit Bielaja Cerkow for Kazatin, but he had not dreamed the Bolos could be so far west of the Dnieper. Sagging back on his stick and pushing it far over, he gave his Balila full throttle for a banking climb out of the Bolshevik fire that was whistling about him.

Czura Ivaga, dark-eyed, gravely gay, was again in the hands of the Bolos. Corsi recalled the afternoon he had found the Professor's daughter mending her own shoes. Then he thought of the Cheka "cage" in Kiev. Anger took possession of him, and he whipped into a *virage* that again pointed him toward Bielaja Cerkow. Heedless of the increasing number of bullet-rents in his wings, he circled low twice. He was about to dive and strafe the troops firing upon him when he recalled the evidences he had seen of the effect of machine-gun fire on some Ukrainian homes. He pulled his nose up and headed for Kazatin.

Several days later when he found Senkowski limping about the field at Berdyczew he asked the Pole: "What about Czura Ivaga?"

The Lieutenant shrugged, explaining in his broken English that he had done his utmost to persuade Czura and her father to leave Bielaja Cerkow, even offering them transportation on the Squadron train, although this was strictly forbidden. Courageously, they had declined. Bielaja

Cerkow was their home; they would remain there and hope for another liberation from the Bolos. Vain hope. This time the Soviet troops put almost the entire populace of the town to the sword, justifying the wholesale murder by declaring that the Ukrainians had fraternized with the Poles and were, therefore, enemies of Bolshevism.

"Did you strafe the town?" Senkowski asked.

"No," Corsi said curtly, walking away.

ON the morning of June 4th Cooper, before going back to Berdyczew, joined Corsi and Chess in a concerted raid south-east of Kazatin. They bombed Red cavalry at Antanow, one bomb firing a building which was seen to burn quickly.

Shortly after daylight the following morning, Major Kurcynsz, Chief of Staff of the Thirteenth Haller Division, called on Corsi at the latter's quarters. The Major's face was gray and drawn with worry.

"Budienny," he said, "has practically surrounded us."

Corsi forgot to be sleepy. "Chess!" he bawled, and heard the Texan's feet hit the floor upstairs.

The Major continued: "Our lines of communication are smashed, utterly smashed. My troops are split into small detachments somewhere to the East and South. I do not even know precisely where the enemy is. I know he is behind us and I know that he holds the road to Berdyczew. Will you, can you—you and the other American—make a reconnaissance flight to the south and locate the lines?"

Corsi looked through the window and shook his head dubiously. Outside a soft, summer rain sifted down through thick, blue-gray fog. His orders were to avoid capture at all costs, not because of any particular regard for his carcass, but because ships and pilots were tremendously valuable. The weather conditions would render any flying hazardous and reconnaissance work difficult to the point of impossibility. He looked again at the Polish major who did not even know the whereabouts of the enemy he was endeavoring so bravely and so hopelessly to fight.

"We'll try," Corsi said.

Breakfastless, the two Kosciuszko men drove to the field, had their sodden planes warmed up. Agreeing upon compass bearings and distances, they took off. The rain trickled down their helmets, flowed inside the collars of their flying coats. Fog, like

billowing ghosts, rolled up out of the Ukrainian forest to make observation impossible. They returned to the field to exchange reports.

"Make anything out?"

"Nope. Did you?"

"Not a thing."

For an hour they drank coffee that a mechanic procured for them, then took off again. This flight, like the first, was but a waste of gasoline and energy. Each time they returned, Major Kurcynsz heard their reports with a gesture of hopelessness, almost despair. About eleven o'clock Corsi signaled the mechanics he had borrowed from a Polish tank company to start the motors. He looked at Chess.

"Three strikes and out, Chesski," he announced. "We've got to do it this time. I'd rather not come back than have to tell that Major we can't find his damned soldiers."

"Me too," Chess agreed, squeezing the rain from his soaked helmet.

At the planes Corsi turned to the Texan. The fog swirled closer about them as though it would hear their conversation.

"So long," Corsi said easily and grinned.

Chess looked up quickly. "You mean stick to it until we find something—or don't?" he asked.

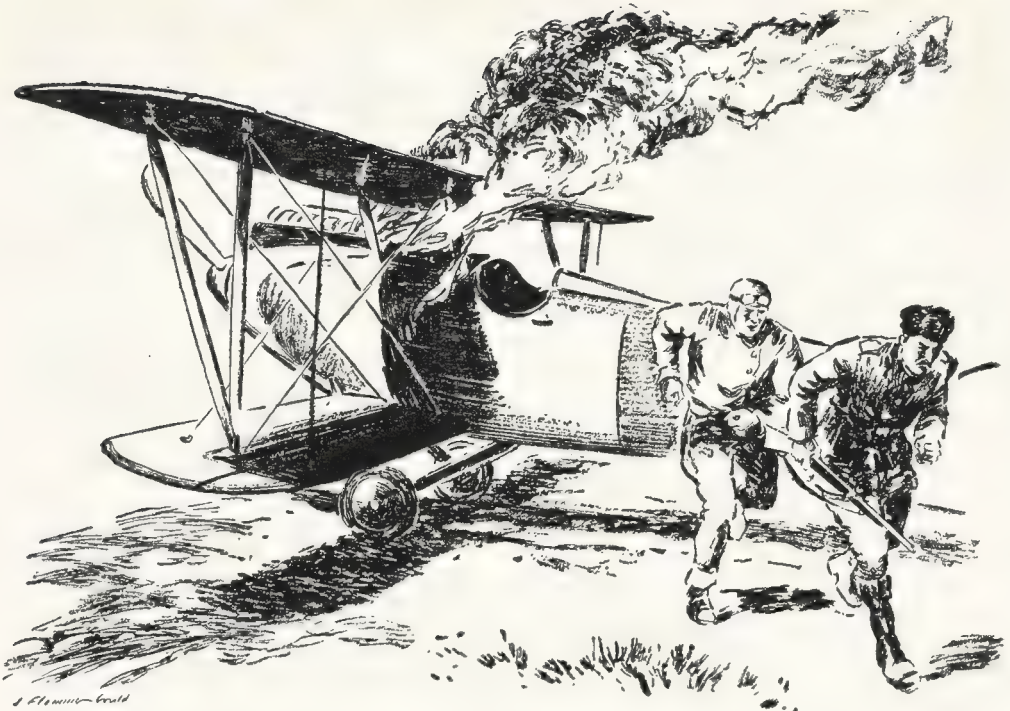
"We've got to," Corsi replied.

"Right," said Chess. "So long, Ed."

THEY took off into the fog-hidden southeast. Beyond the town they tested their machine-guns, as though the mist were a tangible enemy to be dispersed with gunfire. An hour out of Kazatin the miracle happened. The rain stopped. The fog melted. The sun shone. Swinging back over Ruzyn, twenty-five kilometers due east of Kazatin, Corsi found the town swarming with Bolo cavalry. He dropped both his bombs and remained to empty his guns before speeding back to Major Kurcynsz.

He found Chess awaiting him. The Texan also had bombed the Reds. Between them they were able to correct the Thirteenth Division's battle-maps so accurately that the Poles rectified their lines, established communication with most of the scattered outposts and held Kazatin from Budienny for nearly a week. That afternoon Corsi and Chess rejoined the Squadron at Berdyczew.

Berdyczew of evil reputation, had become a city from a maniac's dream. Dawn of June 6th had been scheduled as the zero hour for a Polish counter-offensive designed



Cooper yanked a musket from a Polish infantryman, smashed in his gas tank with the butt, and tossed a match into the inflammable liquid. If he couldn't fly it, neither could the Bolos!

to stem Budienny's advance. But Budienny, the wily, was not to be checked so easily. At midnight of the fifth he achieved the impossible, a massed cavalry attack in the middle of a night as black as the sins of his masters. His troopers, swinging around a Kazatin that continued stubbornly to refuse him, were halted a scant ten kilometers from Berdyczew.

As Budienny's night-riding cavalry closed upon the town, retreating Polish troops swarmed into its streets. Cavalrymen, forever lost from their units, staggered into the town, muttering—crazed.

Infantrymen, stolid, peasant Poles, injured to hardship and to slaughter, stumbled back for new rifles, for ammunition, for leadership. Refugees, stunned, like animated dead, crouched amid the little piles of nondescript personal treasures that only those who flee in terror from an advancing enemy ever collect. To add to the confusion, railroad transportation westward into Poland was hopelessly stalled. Occupying the meager rail facilities at the Berdyczew station were the Squadron train and a Polish army commissary train, many heavily laden cars in length. There was but one locomotive available, and it was rapidly becoming evident that both trains soon would have to retreat from the city.

Perhaps the importance of the Squadron train is not fully understood. On it were carried and stored all of the repair parts necessary to keep the planes in the air. It served, too, as armory and ammunition storehouse. Were it to fall into enemy hands, the Kosciuszko Squadron might as well fly back to Warsaw and resign. Although the Polish staff appreciated this, they were reluctant to leave the large and precious food train without a locomotive to whisk it from Budienny's grasping hands. Therefore they delayed ordering the removal of the Squadron train to Zytomir until the last possible moment—and very nearly lost it!

ALL day June 6th—Sunday—the Kosciuszko Squadron fought savagely. The logged record of that day's flights is an appalling document. No other flying unit ever organized has even approached its stupendous casualties, its enormous damage, in the same period of time or twice that period.

Captain Cooper, discovering at Post Bosybiad the headquarters of one of Budienny's columns, bombed it into the dust.

Captain Corsi, flying over Ruzyn, dropped one bomb on massed soldiery in the square that actually killed thirty-five

men! The definite information comes from Bolshevik documents, captured later and forwarded to the Squadron.

Lieutenant Chess blew up a railroad bridge at Bielowka and inflicted severe casualties when he machine-gunned a Red cavalry column outside the town.

Lieutenant Rorison, in a sustained flight of three hours, left a trail of dead along the road Topory-Bulany-Zarudince.

Captain Corsi, on another flight, again bombed Ruzyn and swept it with machine-gun fire.

Lieutenant Chess, flying again, repeated Corsi's bombing of Ruzyn with disastrous effect and drove a cavalry column from the road Ruzyn-Berdyczew with machine-guns.

Captain Cooper, after a crash on his second take-off, aided with bombs and machine-guns the tanks of Haller's Poles still holding Kazatin.

Captain Corsi bombed Bielopole and covered the Bielopole-Berdyczew road with machine-gun fire.

Major Fauntleroy, after a forced landing on the Berdyczew field that resulted in the burning of the plane, took Lieutenant Senkowski's Balila and strafed southeast of Kazatin.

Lieutenant Shrewsbury, also flying south of Kazatin, could work but little harm because of jammed machine-guns which forced him to return to Berdyczew.

IT should be apparent that the above is but a terse summarization, a bare listing of the flights and their results. To detail the activities of the Kosciuszko Squadron on that day alone would require a story in itself. There was courage and glory, death and destruction enough for a thousand men.

Perhaps they thought of Noble—"Noble of Berdyczew"—the frail, quiet war-bird who, away back in the beginning of things a few weeks before, had driven his fluttering Albatross back over the lines to drop one more bomb, the bomb that cleared the town of its Bolo occupants. Some of those Kosciuszko men say they did think of him. Whether or not he was in their thoughts, they served him well.

Had they halted Budienny? Did the whips of Xerxes halt the waves of the Hellespont? They altered the courses of some of his columns; they impeded the progress of others; but when night had fallen, Budienny, like the turbulent waves, swept again upon the Polish front.

Out on the field the Kosciuszko men

were "standing to." They could care for themselves but the train worried them. To lose it was tantamount to being withdrawn from the front. Shortly before midnight, Major Fauntleroy received information that another locomotive had puffed its laborious way through the jammed rail traffic and was at his disposal. With this information came orders to entrain immediately and proceed to Zytomir, thirty-five kilometers directly north of Berdyczew. The latter town, according to the Polish staff, could not be kept from Budienny another twenty-four hours.

Lieutenant Webber, who, because of the injuries sustained in his crash, had been commanding the train, suddenly discovered that he no longer was a casualty, although many of his cuts were still open.

"Senkowski has a bad leg," he told Major Fauntleroy. "Let him take the train. I'm flying."

The Pole's announcement was received heartily. Every pilot was needed, now. Late that afternoon, Lieutenant Crawford had flown in from the north with the disheartening information that the Bolos were advancing steadily. His ship had been hit again and again.

Acting on the orders to proceed to Zytomir, Major Fauntleroy ordered the last of the ground-crews to cross the town and board the train at the Berdyczew station. The pilots awaited dawn on the field.

That last night in Berdyczew was a never-to-be-forgotten one of alarms and dread. Retreating Polish troops continued to swarm through the town, disorganized, fear-driven, in utter rout. Officers shouted unintelligible orders that could not have been obeyed had they been understood. Wounded cried out in pain, cursed and fought weakly when they were roughly jostled in the dark, teeming streets.

AS it became evident to all that the retreat was rapidly becoming general and that Berdyczew was about to be abandoned to Budienny, the Jewish populace crept from its warrens to make the night completely hellish. From windows, from black alleyways, from every conceivable place of shelter they fired into the retreating Poles at ranges of a few feet, sometimes inches. From upper windows they poured scalding water upon the beaten men stumbling along in the dark below.

The last of the Squadron ground-crews marching across the town from the field to

the railroad station were victims of these covert attacks. Indeed, several of them were wounded and others took what comfort they could from oil-soaked rags bound around burns sustained when boiling water was thrown upon them from above.

However, a stern retribution was visited upon the snipers and water-throwers of Berdyczew. After it was occupied by Budienny's Horde, the Poles counter-attacked in force and recaptured it. They held it several days. When the Bolo Cossacks again clattered in to take possession, they found the houses mere shells. There were few inhabitants.

At daybreak, June 7th, Major Fauntleroy ordered Captain Corsi to make a short reconnaissance over the Bolo lines, return to give a prearranged signal to remain or evacuate, then proceed to Zytomir. During the night the sounds of battle beyond the city had steadily increased from an ominous, muttering growl somewhere off in the east to the sharp staccato of furious conflict close at hand. As Corsi took off, it was evident that the battle was immediately about them. The Captain returned shortly, signaled for evacuation, circled the field and headed for Zytomir.

MAJOR FAUNTLEROY took off at once, ordering the other pilots to stand fast until receiving his signal. He carried his reconnaissance somewhat deeper into the enemy lines than had Corsi, every minute of his flight convincing him of the hopelessness of the situation at Berdyczew. Returning he found a strong patrol of Red cavalry actually entering the town beyond the railroad station. The Poles were stubbornly contesting the city, but it was already lost. Fauntleroy banked over the field, his signal-pistol spraying out the colors that spelled immediate evacuation.

Captain Cooper cupped his hands around his mouth so he could be heard above the thumping of the idling motors.

"All right," he bawled. "On your way!"

It had been agreed that, whether or not they evacuated Berdyczew, the entire Squadron would bomb over the lines before proceeding to Zytomir. At Cooper's order, Webber, Chess and Shrewsbury took off, heading southeast. When leaving the ground one of Shrewsbury's bombs fell off, crashing through his stabilizer and elevator.

Fortunately the bomb did not explode, but the accident rendered the Lieutenant's plane exceedingly difficult to handle. He quit the bombing patrol, heading straight for Zytomir.

Crawford and Rorison were the next two men aloft. Crawford's motor refusing to turn up sufficient revolutions, he made a wide circle of the field, hoping the fault would correct itself. Rorison, realizing his flying mate was in difficulties, turned back, but Crawford vehemently waved him on toward the front. Rory veered and went about his bombing business. A moment later Crawford's ship was in flames. He landed it successfully three kilometers north and west of Berdyczew, fired two precious rounds of pistol-ammunition into his gas tank to help the blaze along, then, afoot and alone, headed west away from Berdyczew and Budienny.

Cooper, on the field, saw Crawford's flaming plane dip out of sight. The Captain leaped into his own ship, gave 'er the gun, and roared out across the field. Just as he gathered flying speed the motor sputtered and died. He swerved the ship, stopped it and lost ten priceless minutes trying to get life from the obstinate engine.

While he tinkered with the mechanism, Polish troops rushed across the field toward him. Budienny held Berdyczew! Cooper yanked a musket from a Polish infantryman, smashed in his gas tank with the butt and tossed a match into the inflammable liquid as it spread over the ship. If he couldn't fly it, neither could the Bolos!

On the far edge of the field was an Opel automobile, that had been held until the last to meet just such an emergency. Cooper raced for it, pointing westward as he ran up.

"Zytomir!" the Polish chauffeur grunted, pointing into the north as though to correct Cooper's direction.

"Zytomir, hell!" Cooper barked, "Crawford!"

Again he pointed toward where he had seen the blazing plane go down. A mile beyond Berdyczew the Opel became hopelessly mired. With a hammer, Cooper smashed as much of the motor as he could. Like his plane, it would be of no use to the enemy. Accompanied by the chauffeur, Cooper also turned westward, away from Berdyczew and the Horde!

Even more exciting exploits of the Kosciuszko men are described in the next installment—in our forthcoming March issue.

Beyond the Llano

The old West lives vividly again in this splendid frontier drama by the author of "The Road to Monterey."

By FREDERICK
R. BECHDOLT

Illustrated by Paul Lehman

IT was an afternoon in May when Brad Lawton came riding up the valley of the Brazos, with his long-barreled single-shot Sharp's rifle slung beneath his stirrup-leather and his huge cap-and-ball six-shooter hanging by his thigh; with his lean young body swinging to the movements of his horse and his weather-stained young face alight with eagerness.

In those golden days, when the Comanches still roved unchecked over the Staked Plains, when the valleys of New Mexico beyond the great tableland were like a world unknown, a man might ride from one end of Texas to the other, with naught but his horse, his blankets and his weapons; and where he chose to end his journey, he could settle down. So Brad was striking out across the verdant prairie, ready for any undertaking that might happen to appeal to him.

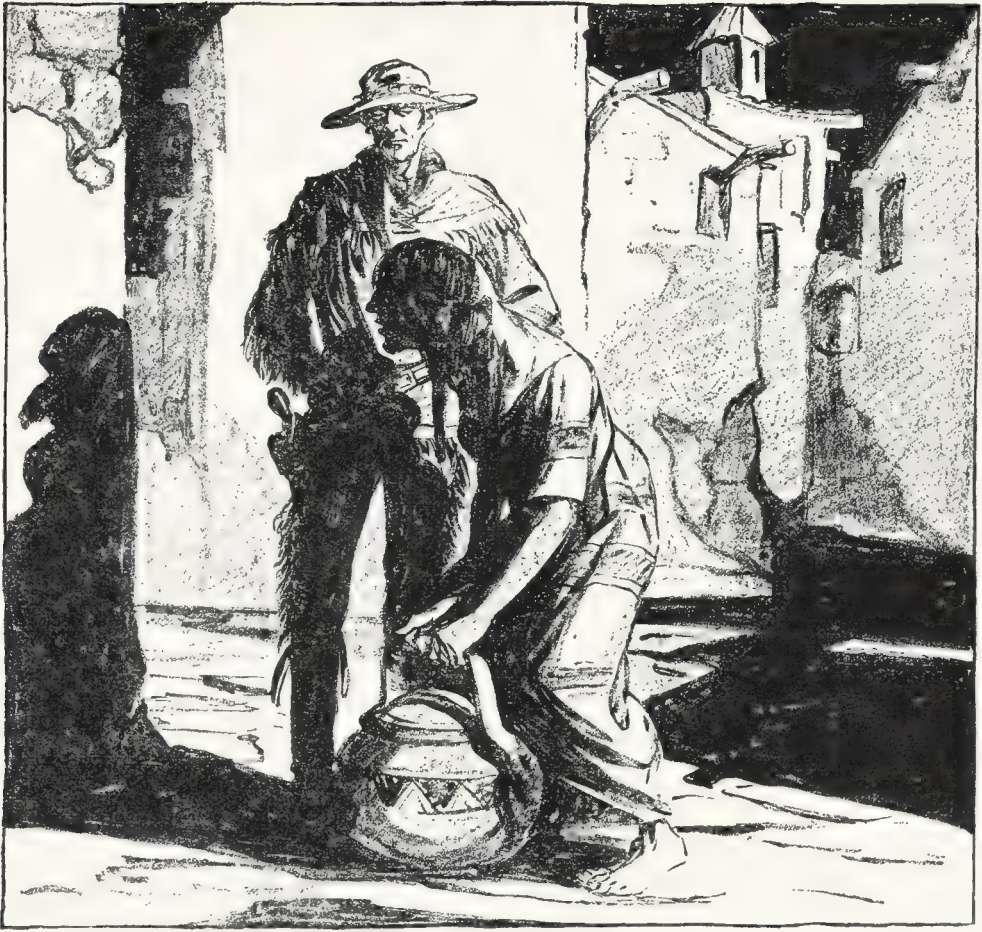
Then, on that afternoon in May, his pony thrust its foot into a badger-hole. When man and animal had disentangled themselves, the former was helpless, with a badly broken leg. Some hours later a teamster found him a mile farther on, whither he had crawled, and took him to the house of Eliza Grey.

It stood near the meeting of the prairie and the fringe of timber in the river bottom, a one-story house of logs, with dirt roof and puncheon floor; and, when Brad awakened from the fever, which he had brought on by dragging the splintered bone across the rough prairie sod, he was lying in the living-room—the front room, they called it then. The afternoon sunlight was pouring through a window near his bed. It was so silent in here that the buzzing of a wild bee outside seemed loud

Forty-eight hours had passed since the pony took that header. The doctor, who had ridden sixty miles to set Brad's leg, had saddled up and started home. But of all this the patient was unaware. He moved his head and looked about. The floor was swept as cleanly as if the split poles were polished hardwood. There were a few articles of home-made furniture and a wide fireplace. His gaze fell on a rag doll. It was sitting near the hearth, on a little rustic chair, fashioned from bits of branches; with its arms grotesquely outspread and its eyes—they were of black thread sewed over and over on the white face—staring in perpetual astonishment.

"So," Brad told himself, "there must be children here. Anyhow, a child." Then, having done all the thinking of which he was capable for the present, he fell into a deep sleep.

THAT evening, waking again, he saw Eliza Grey for the first time. She was standing by the window near his bed; and she held a tallow dip, one of those home-made candles which the women used to manufacture every autumn. Its radiance rose, filling the room, bathing her face; a face which must have once been delicately beautiful; now the fragile features had settled into steady patience. That patience showed itself in every line of her little figure. It seemed to curb the deep eagerness that smoldered in her eyes. As he was watching, she placed the taper on the windowsill. She remained there for some moments, gazing out into the darkness; and in those moments the eagerness became a flame. It subsided and Brad saw her flat breast rise to a deep sigh. She turned and



She set the vessel down as if to rest. Her lips began to move. "She says she could not come; they locked her in her room. She says—tonight!"

found his eyes upon her, with an unuttered question in them.

"It is for my Bonnie Girl," she told him. The patience had leveled her voice and made it very low. But there still remained a little eager catch. She came and smoothed his pillow and afterward she brought some broth; when he had eaten it he drowsed again.

ALL the next day, although Brad listened carefully, he heard no sound of any child; nor on the days that followed. But the rag doll remained in its home-made rustic chair beside the fireplace, facing the door, as if it were expecting its owner to enter at any moment. And every evening, when darkness had fallen, Eliza Grey came to place the tallow dip before the window.

So Brad's wonder grew; but the doctor who had set the bone was not due again until the time for the removal of the splints; and the neighbors were few and far

between; the patient had no company to question save his nurse. And that look, which he had seen so often in her face, that strange mingling of abiding patience and of eagerness that never died, had penetrated the heedlessness of youth, had cut into his heart, until to ask her was beyond him.

A broken leg is about as uncongenial company as an active man can find; and Brad was passing through long days of torment while the bone was knitting. Eliza Grey brought him the only surcease that he knew—when she smoothed his hot pillows, or lifted him into a new position, or sponged his fevered skin with cool water. And, on one of those evenings, when she turned from the window to find his eyes upon her, she read—along with their puzzlement—the presence of his growing affection, born of his gratitude. It was this that brought her to his bedside and called the story from her lips.

"She was all the child we had, named

Mary for my husband's mother, but I called her my Bonnie Girl. And, oh, we did get such joy watching her play out there before the door! Past three years old that summer—thirteen years ago."

SHE was sitting by his bed looking straight before her. The patience had settled down upon her face; the hunger in her eyes was only a faint glow. Her voice was flat, as with great weariness; save at rare intervals, when there came the little eager catching of her breath.

"She was there that morning, with her doll and the little chair that Lem had made for her; and I could hear her talking to herself—the way that children do—while I was at my work. I'd been to the front door a dozen times, to see that everything was safe. In those days the Comanches used to come in big war parties and a woman always lived in fear.

"The last time I went, there wasn't a living creature in sight, excepting Lem, who was hilling corn out in the field, and Bonnie before the threshold. She looked up at me with her big brown eyes and smiled and I threw her a kiss before I hurried back to work."

Eliza Grey paused for just a moment and her face seemed to tighten.

"A few minutes later, I heard the pounding of bare hoofs on the sod. I flew to the front door. Bonnie was sitting there with the rag doll, talking to it. Joseph was its name—but she couldn't say that, and she called it *Jovis*. And she was speaking that baby nickname when a war-whoop drowned her voice; the Comanches came around the corner of the cabin like swarming bees.

"One of their ponies knocked me over. I was getting to my feet when a painted warrior leaned from his horse at the dead run; and I saw him grinning as he snatched my baby up into his arms. Then another struck me with his lance; and it was the last I knew for a long time.

"A company of the men-folks from down the river were chasing this band, and they found me lying there in front of the doorstep. They found Lem's body in the cornfield, and one of them picked up the rag doll a mile or so beyond the river. But that was all."

She bowed her head. Brad laid his hand on her worn little hand, resting on the coverlet. Some moments passed.

"When I got well enough from my wound I came back here and set the cabin

to rights. And the first night when I was home, I put a tallow dip before the window. I thought maybe—" Her voice trailed away. Brad patted the hand gently, and there was no more word between them on the subject.

Until the day of Brad's departure, after telling her his thanks for all that she had done for him, he said:

"Maybe your Bonnie Girl will come back yet some day."

Then she looked him in the eyes and he saw the light of eagerness brightening her patient face, as she answered:

"She will come back."

With that memory of her he rode away. And, as he traveled on, the memory abided. So he made himself a promise—which he would have given her, if he had not been one of that breed who are more fitted for action than for speech.

"I'm going to try and find her Bonnie Girl for her."

IT was two years later when Brad rode into the Plaza Paloduro where the breaks of the Llano Estacado come down to the bottomlands of the Canadian. And that purpose was abiding still. It had led him from the prairies by the Brazos to the Cross Timbers; from the Cross Timbers out upon the Staked Plain. Always with the same question on his lips. He had asked it in the camps of the hide-hunters, following the bison herds over the wide tableland; in the roaring dance-halls of Fort Griffin where border ruffians from the Indian Territory and the dust-stained teamsters from distant army posts and reckless young cow-hunters, back from driving the wild steers to southern Kansas, were jostling one another before the long bars. But none of these had news for him. Then he had crossed the arid plateau to ask it again in Santa Fe and Taos and the settlements along the Pecos. Now he was riding out to ask it of the Comanches themselves, in their sanctuary on the Llano.

On this hot afternoon in early summer, he came with Pablo Escobar and his company of Indian traders—the *Comancheros*, so men called them—on their way to the rendezvous where they were to meet the hostile bands and traffic with them for the mules and horses looted from the settlements of Texas. The cavalcade clattered along the treeless bench, with the wooded bottomlands of the Canadian below them to their left and, on their right, the long

low bluffs rising like mighty stairs to the Llano: pack-mules laden with calico and beads and knick-knacks and the fiery wheat whisky from Taos; and in the dust cloud the swarthy *Comancheros*, with their steep-crowned sombreros and their flaring trousers faced with leather, and their weapons clanking to the movements of their sweating ponies. The Plaza Paloduro lay just ahead of them, and it so happened that Brad was riding on before.

Slowly he rode into the Plaza Paloduro. It was the hour of the siesta. The score of flat-roofed adobes were drowsing in the heat waves, as silent as so many sepulchers about the sandy square. In the middle of the square there was a well, with a sundried wooden curb and a long old-fashioned sweep. And by the well a girl was struggling with a man.

She was a slender girl, just blossoming into the beauty of womanhood, with olive skin and lustrous eyes. He was a fat man, loose-lipped and middle-aged. They were contending there in silence, while the blank walls of the adobe buildings seemed to stand aloof, indifferent alike to her hopeless desperation and his desire.

He was so intent upon that desire and she so engrossed in her own defense that neither of them heard the pony's hoofbeats; they did not see the rider throw himself from the saddle within ten yards of them. The first knowledge the girl had of Brad's presence was as the discovery of an apparition which had, of a sudden, materialized from the thin hot air. His knee was in the middle of her assailant's back; his arm was crooked beneath the gross double chin. There came a swift shifting and another movement, the fat man traveled through the air exactly like a sack of grain, flung from the wagon, to sprawl, full length upon the sandy earth. Some moments later Pablo Escobar and his *Comancheros* entered the plaza to discover him sitting by the well curb, swaying slowly from side to side, dazedly watching their *compadre* out of sight around the corner of the nearest adobe, beside a girl whose beauty was incongruous with her coarse garb.

It was not far that the two walked, not more than forty yards, until they were before the meanest of the flat-roofed houses; then she told him:

"I am sure it was the good saints sent you, for I was praying to them when you came."

As for Brad, it was the first time that a girl had disturbed his life; he was being shaken by a new emotion, of whose existence he had heard; yet it had leaped upon him, unsuspected. Thus far he had been contented to remain silent; to look upon her was enough. There was that in her slender figure which left him unconscious of the coarseness of her dress, of the black *reboso's* frayed edge; her feet and hands were small, with a delicacy which beautified the rawhide sandals. But it was her face that drew his gaze, and when he looked upon it he forgot everything else: in all the world that little face, with its clear olive skin and the fineness of its features; with the soft red lips and the glory of the brown eyes—it was the only thing that mattered. But now she had halted.

"I must leave you," she was saying. That roused him to speech.

"And I will see you soon. This afternoon again?" he asked.

She shook her head. "This evening then?" he importuned.

"Who knows?" She smiled as she let fall the old Spanish phrase with its customary movement of the shoulders. And she turned, as if to enter the heavy door of split planks, but did not lift the latch.

"We are to be here only two days," he went on swiftly, "and then we go. In that short time there is so little chance. And this evening—"

"Sometimes," she interrupted softly, "after my father and mother are asleep, I slip out into the plaza by the well, where one can look up and see the stars. Perhaps tonight—" She turned and, this time she did not pause, but entered the house, leaving him alone outside.

WHEN he came back into the sandy square the *Comancheros* were busy with the packs and horses, but Brad paid no heed to them. As to the journey out upon the Llano, he had forgotten it; he had forgotten about the little woman with the patient face and the pathetic, eager eyes; the promise he had made himself for her.

That evening, when the rest of the company were lounging around their fire and the horses were munching their feed in the corral near by, while the long blue shadows were creeping up from the river bottom, growing deeper on the benchland, Pablo Escobar took his American recruit to one side and had a word or two with him. He was a blocky man and the marks of

smallpox were thick upon his swarthy face, but they did not hide the lines of wisdom.

"This I am telling you, so that you will understand, my son," he said. "That girl, Chiquita, her father is Francisco Chavez. He is a *jicarilla*—one of those meat-hunters who go out upon the Llano to kill the buffalo with their lances—a poor man, and what the next season will bring to him, he does not know. Now the fat man, whom you threw over your shoulder so carelessly by the well this afternoon, he is Pedro Rodriguez, the alcalde of Puerta de Luna, with a big rancho and many sheep ranging the hills. And, what is more, the flea-bitten meat-hunter of a father, he has betrothed the daughter to this Señor Rodriguez, who has come here to fix the day when the marriage will be celebrated in Puerta de Luna."

To which young Brad answered:

"Judging from what I saw, that betrothal is not to the daughter's fancy then."

Pablo Escobar shrugged his burly shoulders. "It is for your body's health I tell you. Pedro Rodriguez is a big man and there are plenty here with sharp knives who would go far to win his favor."

This time Brad was the one who shrugged his shoulders, but he had the grace to thank his swarthy friend for the advice.

The darkness deepened; the slender new moon floated above the level roof-tops; it sank slowly and vanished under the sky's rim; the blue night settled down and the last lights went out; the low buildings became vague shadows and the old well curb, with its long wooden sweep, a crooked blur. It was near midnight when Chiquita came and found Brad waiting for her there. Perhaps her heart beat faster at the sight of him, but she only said:

"I did not think you would be here so late, Señor."

"I would have waited till the dawn for you," he told her simply, and added: "My name is Brad. Wont you call me that?"

"Brad," she repeated it almost inaudibly as if for her own ears alone; then: "It sounds so strange. All the American names do—the ones that I have heard." But she said it again under her breath.

He could see her form in silhouette against the night, her little face a triangle of white. The slumbering light in her eyes seemed to penetrate his being. Her soft voice lingered on his name, with a caressing note. It was the first time that love

had come to him; he had not known there could be such a moment—a moment which left the rest of life drab by comparison.

"And you will go away two days from now," she was saying.

"But in a week from then I will be back," he answered eagerly.

"It may be I will be gone when you return." He thought he heard her sigh.

"Is it to be so soon?" he asked.

"My marriage—they have told you then?" Her voice had hardened.

"He will never take you. Not if I have to carry you away!" Brad asserted.

He could feel her breath upon his cheek. "*Carissimo mio!*" she whispered.

He seized her hand. And then—it came so quickly that he did not realize its taking place until he felt the softness of her body against his—he had her in his arms; their lips met.

As he was standing looking down into her eyes, they darkened with a sudden fear; she drew away with an abruptness that made his heart sink.

"There in the shadow by the wall," she told him breathlessly, "I heard some one. I must go."

"Tomorrow night?" he begged.

"Tomorrow night," she assented.

HE watched her until she had vanished in the darkness by the houses; and afterward he searched the shadows for the one whom she had heard, but found no sign. Recalling the advice of Pablo Escobar—and the night being sultry—he left his bed where he had made it down and slept on the soft sand, some distance from it. The trick was old in this border country. Nevertheless the dawn discovered him with a whole skin; and when he came to roll up his blankets, he found them slit through in two places. That day's existence was divided between the happiness of thinking back on last evening's brief hour by the well and the irksomeness of waiting for this evening which was yet to come.

But when midnight arrived, with him alone there in the center of the plaza, the eagerness had given way to forebodings. And when the whitening of the eastern sky told him of the approaching dawn, there came, to mingle with the forebodings, the knowledge that, in two hours, the *Comancheros* would be leaving for their journey out upon the Llano. The day broke and the sun climbed higher; the swarthy members of Pablo Escobar's company were

busy with the packs. A withered woman, bent with age, her skin as dark as one of those oaken rafters which had been gathering the smoke for years in the adobe houses, came by, with an earthen olla on her shoulder, filled with water from the

turned to him, the memory of Eliza Grey. He saw her face, as he had seen it when he said good-by to her before her cabin by the Brazos, with its weight of patience and the longing that lived on.

It seemed to him as if he had been standing there a long time, in silence, while the old woman waited, bending over her olla. In that interval, all of his happiness had



The first knowledge the girl had of Brad's presence, his knee was in her assailant's back.

well. She set the vessel down, as if to rest, and turned her wrinkled face toward Brad; her lips began to move.

"She says she could not come. They locked her in her room. She says—to-night!" He heard the words and straightened from his task of lashing the load between the *aparejos*. The old woman bent toward the olla.

NOW all of last night's ordeal was repaid by that message. Brad's answer was upon his lips—that he would wait to-night, beside the well. He would remain behind and these others would go on without him. What did that expedition matter to him now? So, for the fraction of a moment, he stood, about to speak.

And then, for the first time since he had come to the Plaza Paloduro, there re-

departed. In its stead he had the bitterness of realization.

Realization that he had made himself a promise; that, if he did not keep it, he would carry with him that memory of Eliza Grey, through all the years, to intervene between him and his love.

"Tell her that I must go, but in a week I will come back to her," he said at last.

The old woman picked up the olla and went on across the square. The *Comancheros* clattered out of the Plaza Paloduro, to dwindle slowly in a cloud of dust along the level benchland, until they vanished and the dust cloud melted in the thin hot air. Brad rode in silence. For the thing which he had so blithely undertaken on the Texas prairie, had become a duty which he no longer followed with youth's eagerness; it drove him on.

IT was the last day of the trading. Here on the level reaches of the Llano Estacado, a village of buffalo-hide lodges stood. Some ponies cropped the scanty sun scorched grass nearby; and a few squaws were busy at their morning toil among the tepees; a horde of sharp-nosed dogs were searching for offal. A quarter of a mile or so away, a circle of silent Indians sat on the dry upland sod. Their features were expressionless as wood, save their black eyes; they glowed with eagerness. Still farther off, four riders were receding rapidly across the flat, driving a herd of barefooted horses and mules before them—the fruits of these last five days' bartering. When riders and animals had become a cluster of dots upon the brown plain, Pablo Escobar and a seasoned *compadre* brought from their hiding-place the little kegs of wheat whisky, and broached them in the center of the waiting circle. This done, they mounted and rode away, on the dead run, and, when they had overtaken the others, the company spurred on, harrying the herd before them at top speed. For the Taos whisky was potent stuff; and, with a few drinks, the red warriors were all too apt to forget who owned those ponies now.

As the pace increased, Brad Lawton kept ahead of all the others. Five days of slow haggling about the opened packs; five nights of slower talk around the fire in the council lodge, while the red stone pipe passed from hand to hand. Always the maddening indirection; the long circling about a subject until the expressionless swarthy features of his auditor relaxed and the latter slowly backed into the topic. In all that time there came no shred of information leading toward the baby who had been carried away from the cabin by the Brazos more than fifteen years ago.

He had done the best he could. Now he was free to hasten, as fast as his horse could carry him, to the Plaza Paloduro.

The swarthy *Comancheros* pressed on, crowding the herd without mercy during the day's long heat. They traveled well into the night. The darkness was heavy when they came into the hamlet and made their camp in the sandy square. The weary riders threw themselves upon the earth and slept. All save Brad. He waited by the well for dawn.

The horizon paled; a flush crept up the eastern sky; the growing light revealed the stark outlines of the flat-roofed buildings.

Some goats were nosing for food by the corral. A door opened and another; a woman came to the well for water. The Plaza Paloduro had awakened for the day.

But the little house of Chavez, the meat-hunter, remained silent; there was no sign of life within. A mud-colored cube, basking in the heat waves of the morning, there was something sinister in its stillness.

The old woman who had whispered the message to Brad a week before, was coming across the square with her olla. As he stood watching her it seemed to him it was impossible for a living mortal to walk so slowly. He hurried to meet her and she turned her head to look up at him. Her face was like a mask.

"You are too late," her voice creaked like a rusty hinge. "Two days ago they left for the wedding at Puerta de Luna."

It so happened that Pablo Escobar was awakened a few minutes later by the bite of the sun upon his face; and he opened his eyes in time to see Brad saddling up. Being an honest soul, the *Comanchero* prevailed upon this impetuous *compadre* to delay his departure long enough for some sort of a settlement. Otherwise the latter would have ridden away with no more wealth than his horse and saddle and his weapons.

As the road wound it was a four-day journey from the Plaza Paloduro to the village of Puerta de Luna by the Rio Pecos. The clumsy cavalcade of the meat-hunter Chavez and his relatives would surely need all of that time. And Brad had neither womenfolk nor the desire for rest to hamper his progress. But the feed back there on the Llano had been scant and his horse had been doing its good share of traveling, during these past two weeks. Before the first twelve hours was done, the rider realized that too much haste would set him on foot with more than half the distance still ahead of him. To husband a jaded pony's strength is an irksome ordeal at the best; with him it became torment increasing as the slow miles dragged by. It was at the end of the third day that he came down the valley of the Pecos, his worn-out mustang stumbling at every other step.

TWILIGHT was growing on to darkness. Puerta de Luna lay half a mile ahead. Little flecks of orange light showed in the windows. The sound of music came, faint with distance, through the blue dusk. To Brad it was as the announcement that his



While the plump fingers were still clutching for the knife-hilt, Brad closed in.

hopes were ended. Music would mean the wedding, nothing less. Then, as his heart was sinking within him, the staggering pony summoned up the energy to shy.

Three vague forms appeared, blurred shades, before him in the middle of the roadway—a man and two horses. The former was short in stature and far gone in drink. The latter were spirited. He was holding one by its tether, the while he strove to mount the other, bareback. And, although the animals were showing him that strange consideration which horses, for some reason of their own, bestow on drunkards, his final effort left him on his back between the ox-cart ruts. He picked himself up as Brad drew rein.

"My friend," he pleaded, "will you of your kindness hold this cursed strumpet of a mare, until I mount her misbegotten brother? You will still be in time to fill your skin with good red wine. For they will dance in honor of the bride until the dawn."

"Then the marriage has taken place?" Brad's voice was dull.

"The marriage," the drunkard re-

peated with slow minuteness in the pronunciation of every syllable. "Well as to the marriage, the priest from Santa Fe will do that little thing tomorrow morning. And then there will be more eating, and more barrels broached. And so, my friend, if you will but hold this Jezebel—"

While he was speaking, Brad had slid from the saddle; and now he interrupted, with a proposition so far from the original subject that it took some time for it to penetrate the other's understanding.

"That being the case," said he, "what will you take for those two horses?" And, while the bargain was being struck, he had the forethought to include therein the purchase of a sound saddle.

THE strumming of two guitars and the droning of an accordion came through the blue darkness from the house of the alcalde of Puerta de Luna. Within the low-ceilinged room whose rafters of carelessly trimmed poles were darkened by the smoke of many seasons from the wide fireplace, a dozen couples wound their way in sedate gyrations through the long Spanish

waltzes. And following the women, like a mist that drifted with their movements, a pungent cloud of white powder filled the air. Among all those fat señoras and lithe sloe-eyed señoritas gliding to the guidance of their partners with smooth grace, there was but one whose complexion remained without that thick coating of white. At the upper end of the room Chiquita sat; on one side of her, the bandy-legged bent-backed little meat-hunter, with his bristle of black beard, looking for all the world like a mahogany-colored gnome; and on the other, as serenely placid as one of the mountains whom her bulk suggested, the Señora Chavéz. The accordion droned on and on; the guitars throbbed to the passion of Chihuahua love-songs. The vaqueros and the meat-hunters in their bell-mouthed trousers with the leather facings, chose new partners from the row of silent señoritas and their beaming mothers. But only rarely did one of these guests venture to the room's upper end where the bride-to-be was sitting, and he who made the venture was always a friend or relative. For Pedro Rodriguez was close by, decked out in velvet trousers and a sash of silk; a man of power in these parts, and not without his jealousy.

WHEN Brad entered the long room it was late in the evening; none took more than passing note of him as he came through the wide open door. He went straight to the sacred upper end. Then a tenseness settled down upon the dancers and the music faltered for a single note; for, without the formality of asking her mother—and, for that matter, so far as anyone could see, without having even made the request of the bride-to-be—he was stepping out upon the floor, with the meat-hunter's pretty daughter on his arm. Some of the younger women said that she was frightened, but those señoras who were near maintained that it was another emotion that made the blood fly from her cheeks. Perhaps both contentions were right. At any rate she was dancing now with the stranger, while her bandy-legged little father scowled and the Señora Chavez sat beside him—like a mountain still, but it was a mountain over whose crest a thundercloud is gathering. As for the alcalde of Puerta de Luna, he breathed heavily, twisting his black mustaches, then rose abruptly from his place and, with a feline swiftness, which seemed incongruous to his bulk, he made his way toward the open door.

The couples were thick on the floor; there was but little opportunity for speech. And one or two of the leather-trousered vaqueros were slipping away from their partners, edging through the crowd toward this pair on whom all eyes were hanging. But the huge cap-and-ball six-shooter was dangling beside Brad's thigh and his gray eyes had turned the color of old ice. So, as yet, he and Chiquita danced unhindered, with a goodly space about them; and he whispered in her ear:

"I have come. There are two horses waiting around the corner of the building."

CHIKUITA nodded by way of answer. He guided her straight down the long room toward the door. Now they were opposite the entrance. She left his arms and darted out into the night. The alcalde of Puerta de Luna gained the threshold a step or two behind her. Brad was still in the room.

The accordion uttered a long groan. The guitars ceased in the middle of a bar. The dancers halted in their tracks.

The two men stood, during an instant which the suspense of the watchers stretched into many times its length, facing each other. The right hand of Pedro Rodriguez was slipping swiftly toward his enormous waist. Before the gesture was completed, while the plump fingers were still clutching for the knife-hilt beneath the short jacket, Brad closed in. His arms went out, and his body lunged forward. There followed another of those suspense-prolonged moments, during which the two forms swerved and lurched with dizzying abruptness. And then, even as he had done by the wellside in the Plaza Paloduro, the fat man soared over Brad's shoulder, to alight among the scattering spectators with a thump that left him sprawling dazed upon the earthen floor.

There were several bolder spirits who started toward the doorway. But the six-shooter which had been hanging by Brad's thigh was in his hand now, and his gray eyes were searching them across its barrel. So he remained until the hoof-beats of the horses sounded in the dark. After which he turned and vanished from the sight of those within.

SOME miles below Puerta de Luna there was a ford to the old valley trail. As they were crossing, with the splash of water in their ears, Brad leaned from his saddle toward Chiquita.

"At Fort Sumner we'll find one who can marry us," he said. And those words, with the current swirling round them in the darkness, were his proposal.

IT was some two months later when they came traveling down the Brazos Valley. The prairie was turning brown and the days were growing shorter. Evening had well begun and the candle was burning in the window when they drew near the cabin of Eliza Grey.

The temptation was strong to ride on by. For, although he had done his best, the memory of that promise, which he had failed to fulfill, was like a reproach. It seemed to him as if to face that patient woman and to see the light of eagerness in her eyes, was a punishment which he had not deserved. And the more so, because he would come before her in the fulfillment of his own happiness—while all her hopes were empty still.

But to pass by without stopping to see her, who had done so much for him, was not to be considered. And so, telling his wife of the kindness which had been poured upon him in that cabin, he rode up with her and dismounted by the door. It opened before he was able to knock, and he stepped inside, with Chiquita following him, a little hesitant, a pace behind. Eliza Grey was standing with her hand still on the latch, with the weary patience in her face, the light of longing in her eyes.

"You don't remember me?" he asked, for she was paying no heed to his presence, looking straight past him. He got no further than that question.

Her hand had dropped from the latch. She was standing rigid, and the embers of longing had burst into a flame. Brad's heart sank as he realized the thought that had come to her. The danger of so hideous a mistake had never occurred to him—that she should believe this girl whom he had brought across the Llano to be the child for whom she had been waiting all these years. He was fumbling in his mind for words to meet the situation. And, while he hesitated, Eliza Grey stepped forward, brushing him aside as if he did not exist; she had Chiquita in her arms.

"My little girl! My Bonnie Girl!"

THAT cry was more than flesh and blood could bear. Brad saw the bewilderment in his wife's face; he saw her drawing back, a little frightened. The worn hands were

stroking her hair. The voice, which had so long been flat with the weariness of waiting, was soft and flexible, uttering those sweet crooning sounds which mothers make when they are bending over their babies. He reached out toward them. His own voice sounded strange to him as he spoke.

"Stop!" What he was about to say he did not know. It was in his mind to tell this hard truth as gently as possible. But that seeming necessity was suddenly removed from him.

For his wife had slipped out of the embrace that held her. She was gazing at the rag doll in its little rustic chair by the fireplace. And her bewilderment had vanished. In its place there had come that puzzled expression which lingers in the eyes of one striving hard to recall something long forgotten. For the first time since she had entered the room she spoke.

"Jovis." She said it slowly, halting between the syllables as if uncertain. Then she went across the room and knelt beside the doll.

"Jovis!" This time there was no hesitation. She picked it up and held it to her breast, as little girls do.

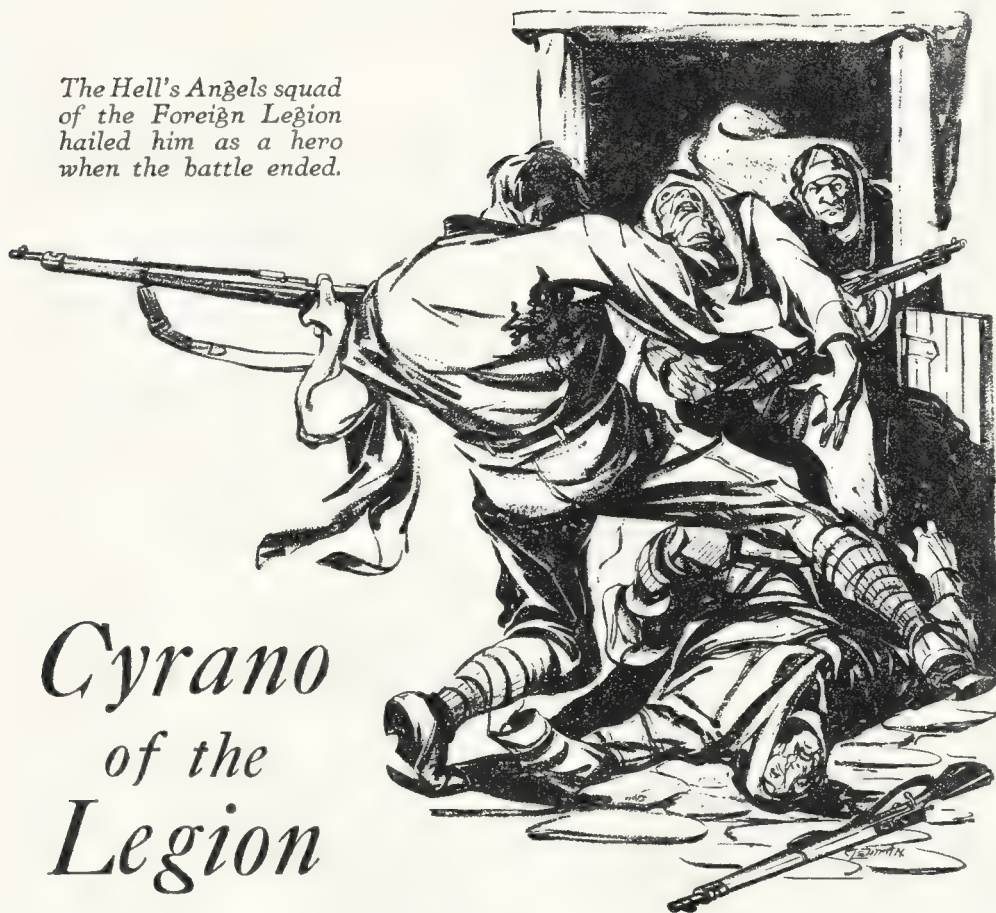
Eliza Grey had been watching her in silence. In silence still, she walked to the window and took the candle from it.

MEMORY plays strange tricks. During the weeks that followed—the years that afterward went by—Chiquita was never able to recall so much as a single fragment of that interval between this cabin by the Brazos and the adobe house where she grew up in the Plaza Paloduro. Two summers passed before Brad made the journey across the Llano and got the story from the lips of Chavez, the little meat-hunter; how he had ventured out upon the great plain, one of a band of *Comancheros* such as that of Pablo Escobar, and had bought the baby from a blanketed savage for a pint of Taos whisky.

But stranger than his wife's forgetfulness—it seemed to Brad—was Eliza Grey's sureness in remembering the face which she had not seen since babyhood—a woman's face now. And one evening he mentioned it to her. The answer which she gave was but another proof of a fact that, in such vital matters, women do not need to fall back on the processes of cold reason. For all she said was:

"She was my child. I would have known her if she had been old and wrinkled."

The Hell's Angels squad
of the Foreign Legion
hailed him as a hero
when the battle ended.



Cyrano of the Legion

By WARREN HASTINGS MILLER

Illustrated by Paul Lehman

A ROWDY French song hooted derisively through the dusky camel-market of Ksarine Fougani, where loomed the gigantic figure of a lone Legionary:

*"Il est cocu, le chef de gare!
Cocu! Cocu! Cocu!"*

The ironic soul of France, its ribald gibes at Authority as personified by the magnificent *chef de gare* in his gold lace and formidable mustaches, was in that song. But it was not appreciated down here in the dark belt of the Saharan Morocco, for a sarcastic voice called: "Eh? Go to bed—if you have any!" Another: "Hit the holy lamp-post over the bean!"

"Hein?" called back the singer, stopping abruptly. "Come out here and I'll plop your eyes in, *maraud!*" Then he resumed:

"Car sa femme l'a voulu—"

"Species of calf's head, shut up your jaw!"

Corporal Criswell added to that growl, hurled from the Légion P. C., his own appeal to Sar-Major Texas Ike: "For Gawd's sake, Ike, smother the son! Listen!"

From high overhead where two minarets rose over the two halves of Ksarine Fougani was floating out the evening Moslem call to prayer—"Allah il Akbar! . . . Allah il Akbar! . . . Allah il Akbar!"

The Légion knew—and the Tirailleurs knew, too—that a respectful silence was due for at least a few minutes while that call was ringing out, if you would get on with the Arabs. But no one could choke off De Gaillac when the wine was in him and song bubbled out. It had been tried before. You had to gag or slug him—a dubious procedure, for he held the amateur boxing championship of France.

"*Pst!* Silence, I command!" Lieutenant Hortet had come to the door of the P. C. to add the authority of a commissioned officer to the Légion's imprecations.

"—*C'était sa fameuse idée—ah!*"

howled right on the incorrigible De Gaillac, his immense bony figure weaving indistinctly in the twilight. There were yells of delight over this further defiance of all authority as Ike strode out into the wide muddy square, filled with wrath and bent on slapping him down. This was a naughty world, Ike admitted, and Ksarine Fougani at present the hottest part of it, but some pleasantries were not to be borne. And one of them was starting trouble in a town already seething with rabid partisanship. For Ksarine Fougani, as its Arabic dual *ine* indicates, was in reality two towns, divided only by that long rectangular camel-market. And one half was violently for the new boy-Caliph and French restoration of order and peace in the Tafilelt, while the other was just as violently for Sultan Belkacem and his present rule, supported by the hard-riding, fighting Desert tribes of the Aït Atta Confederation.

The town was Commandant Knecht's first foothold in that great Saharan oasis of fifty towns like it called the Tafilelt, with its three million date palms and two hundred thousand of hostile population. It was not far south of Erfoud, the French *poste* on the mountain of that name, which covered the main caravan routes running north out of the Tafilelt for Fez and Marrakesh. A platoon consisting of two sections each from the Sixth Tirailleurs and the Légion had been installed here under Lieutenant Hortet, with Sergeant Ike of the Légion and Sergeant Lodève of the Tirailleurs as his seconds. A typical general staff arrangement—but unfortunate. For the Sixth Tirailleurs had their barracks across the street from the Légion in Sidi bel Abbès, and thereby hung a feud. Grudges between them dated back to the Legionary's recruit days in "Blab," as that hated town was called, and feeling was still virulent. To avoid family rows before the Arabs, Hortet had given the Tirailleurs charge of the Sultanite half of the town, and the Légion section the Caliphite.

AS Ike squidged through the muck of the camel-market to deal ungently with the uproarious De Gaillac, the latter held up a huge hand and called: "Stop!"

Ike stopped. Peculiar, that effect of De

Gaillac's commanding personality on even a sar-major! Anyway, he had stopped singing, was no longer ruffling the religious feelings of the Arab population. Ike intended gathering him in and giving him one of those sar-major heart-to-heart talks with a damn'-fool buddy, mostly profane. He liked the big recruit from Bel Abbès, but it was Commandant Knecht who had most shrewdly judged him. "Behold, a modern Cyrano, my cowboy sergeant!" he had introduced the recruit to his sergeant. "*C'est un type!* I yearn to see how you will modify him with your homely sense of the horse, my Buffalo Bill! He has joined us because he is disgusted with the falsity and folly of the world. *Pardieu*, he seeks men and truth in the Légion, this Gascon!"

"He wont find nothin' but thieves an' liars in this outfit," Ike had rejoined. "Yeah, I'll modify the son, Commandant—on the jaw!"

"Cyrano" had swept off his képi in a magnificent salute, at that. "Charmed! And right now?"

It was about then that Ike learned that De Gaillac was the amateur boxing champion of France—when picked up out of a corner! Knecht had laughed for an hour by the clock, the unfeeling monster!

No use trying to slug him now; but there were other ways and better. He could be reached through his heart, his reason—above all, his punctilious sense of the justice of things. He had offended, unwittingly, the Arab religious fervor by his ribald song at the *muezzin* hour? —None more ardent to make amends when shown! But just then De Gaillac raised his voice in a tremendous shout and bellowed: "*A bas la République!*"

IT was too much, that challenge of the Royalist to every soldier of the Republic present! Furious yells from both sides of the square. "Pig! Rabbit! Mackerel! Camel! Give him the poached eye, the satanic animal! *Espèce de crapule!*" Both Légion and Tirailleurs were moving out in a body. De Gaillac squared around with poised fists. He would fight the entire platoon—and glory in it!

"That's enough, you!" rasped Ike, advancing ahead of them. "Guard-house for yours, bud! Grab him, you fellers—no knock-fightin'!"

It might have taken its usual military course of discipline, but just then two Arab small boys came running by to see

what it was all about. Their bare feet squished in the soupy mud, and one was towing a dead bird behind him on a string, and the other an old sandal. Of what value as playthings these boyhood treasures served, Ike could not imagine, but he soon learned. As the foremost neared De Gaillac, he gave the string a yank, and—*plop!*—full in the face that muddy bird jumped out of the mire and smote the hero. In the gloom De Gaillac could not connect that bird with the small *ouled* near him, but thought that some fresh guy had thrown something. With a roar he went for Sergeant Lodève of the Tirailleurs, his long arms slugging like pistons, his long legs driving in the blows from the heel and boring like a battering ram into the mass of them. All the rest of the Tirailleurs piled in to help their sergeant.

The Légion, led by Ike, charged too, yelling battle-cries. They would deal with De Gaillac, but let the Tirailleurs try it—

IT was a fine shindy; but the trouble with it was that the Arab population, seeing their respective Roumi fighting, decided to pitch in too, each for his own side. They knew nothing of fist-fighting. Their idea of a good time was everything they had, knives, snickersnees, long guns, ancient muskets, yataghans, everything in the shop. Ksarine Fougani rose with a whoop. In less than two minutes the entire camel-market was filled with a roaring, shooting, stabbing mob. Piles of dry camel-feed were touched off and lit up the scene with a lurid glare. Burnouses, hundreds of them, jammed in a surging sea. Flash of steel, spurt of red flame, the thundering reports of black powder. Over it all the *Boom-a-room-boom!* of rhythmic Arabic drums beaten maddeningly on the rooftops. All the rest of the populace was up there to look on.

The bitter, savage shouts of Lieutenant Hortet were dominating the soldier battle now. Ike had never seen the old ex-zouzou madder! He had come out followed by a few with armfuls of bayoneted Lébels and was barking: "*Houp! Laissez!—Prenez armes! Cows! Frogs! Doormats! Name of the Devil, fall in! Everybody!—vite!*"

His sword led the compact square of men that formed under his orders. The front edge of it was fringed with long bayonets and the sides with fists. But they were in a gorgeous puddle of peril here, for the Arab mob was quick to realize that the

fight was off and had decided, with one mind, to put it on again, with the help of Allah, and finish up *all* these Roumi now that most of them were unarmed. Shouts came from over on the Tirailleurs' side of the square, then the spiteful whip of Lébels and the rip of hard-points overhead. A gang of heady ones had raided the Tirailleurs' P. C., and now had every weapon belonging to that section in their hands!

Sergeant Lodève, seeing that, raised a yell of fury:

"Come on, *garçons! Sapristi!* We take them back with our bare hands!" There was a rush of the Tirailleurs section bulging back into the mob again. De Gaillac barred it with his huge form. "*Que diable? You who know nothing of la boxe! It is for me, that!*"

"Name of God, no!" bellowed Hortet. "Too late! This way, men! To the *ksar* of the Caliphites! We take it, us! To the citadel!"

Even then De Gaillac would have remained, all alone, to do what he could about those rifles. But Ike laid a large paw on him. "Yo're under arrest, son, an' don't ye forgit that! You come with us and take yore medicine like a gentleman—"

"*Bah!*" said De Gaillac impenitently, and then the whole mass of them surged over to the Légion's P. C., where arms were hurriedly passed out. Hortet led them on up a lane, the rear guard holding off the following mob with sustained rifle-fire. They reached the *ksar*, a great stone structure dominating the surrounding houses, brushed aside what opposition there was, bashed in the gate, and filed into its court. And then De Gaillac was missed. . . .

Stupefaction. "But where *is* he, that *malin* who started all this?" demanded Hortet with a growl of wrath. "We who were to keep this *sacré* town quiet—*pooh!*"

"Search me, Looie!" said Ike. "Last I seen of the nut, he says '*Bah!*' when I told him it was about time he got his'n. Thought he was at me elbow, peaceable-like. He hed a fool notion of goin' after them rifles all by his lonely, seein' 'twas his fault the Tirailleurs lost 'em," Ike added.

"*Peste!* And he *did*, you bet!" said Hortet. "*C'est un original*, that one! Well, he's dead now. One man, unarmed, in all that mob—*que diable!* But it was the gesture superb."

"Mebbe," said Ike, chewing. He looked around on Hell's Angels, that hard-boiled squad who courted adventure like a mis-

tress. They were around him now, his Old Guard—giant Criswell, stocky Anzac Bill, that tall and snooty Italian count Di Piatti, that nonchalant Englishman the Honorable Geoffrey Royde-Austen, called "Jeff," Mora the swarthy Spanish bull, Rosskoff the Russian, who was lazy and full of words, and the new recruit, Calamity Cyclops, whom they had wangled out of the Third Légion during a reconnaissance into the Grand Atlas, but who was a sharpshooter extraordinary.

"None of us guys likes this bird—aint it the truth?" led off Ike. "You remember, Bill, when you tried to Mister him, and got lammed into Kingdom Come? Now, Di Piatti here, he don't mind his Mr. Dee one little bit—"

"*Pah!*" Di Piatti grinned. "What's a title nowadays? *Carte de visite* among the degenerate nobility! I shall resume mine seriously when Mussolini proclaims himself Emperor and a title will *mean* something again! But this De Gaillac, he takes his seriously right now. A Gascon baron—with two cowsheds and a farmhouse for a barony! One might think it was still the reign of the Grand Louis! But one has to respect that, no? And so—"

"Quite," agreed the Honorable Jeff, who also was of the nobility. "It's the beggar's point of view, y'see. Royalist, what? France is being run by the mob at present, but only temporarily, as he sees it. It obliges him to show us what an old noble was like, that his type is the one that should do the ruling, what? Incorruptible, punctilious, fearless, scorning shams and falsehoods, *not* supple and fawning and two-faced like a modern politician. Jove! I admire a man brave enough to be all that nowadays!"

It was quite a speech for that pithy Jeff. But Sergeant Ike came of a breed who was all that too, nowadays—the American cowman of the open range. Ike grinned and said: "What I was gittin' at, Jeff: This guy aint got no horse-sense, but he shore has his nerve! An', thinks I, he aint dead, nohow. Takes more'n a mob of Ay-rabs to beat even one like him! And we's seven, countin' me. Is he goin' to get away with it, all by his lonesome, out thar? And we safe an' snug hyar inside strong stone walls?"

"Here they come! The whole town!" came down a hail from the Tirailleurs on the parapet at that moment.

"And hyar we *goes!*" said Ike fiercely. "Dead or alive, we brings back that *hom-*

bre! Haint I got a nice li'l sixty-pound sack of sand for him to tote for a week? Him an' his floutin' my orders!"

HE reported to Hortet for permission. "*Morbleau!*" growled the ancient zouave. "*Encore une beau geste!* You may go, my sergeant, but, name of a pipe, it is tiresome to be in command! I would go too!"

"Not this trip, old-timer," said Ike. "You'll have to stay and run the show here. Looks like some party to me!"

It sounded like a nice one coming off. The roar of the mob was surrounding the *ksar* like a sea. They were coming up every alley, the Tirailleurs were reporting, and bore with them every ladder leading to roof doors to be found in the village. Hortet would need all his rifles!

Di Piatti laughed. "*Chut!* It's not equal, Sergeant Ike. *He* had nothing but his bare fists!"

"But what fists!" retorted Ike. "Howsomever, seven more rifles would go good with these pore unarmed Tirailleurs. What say, you guys?"

A reckless and hysterical yell guffawed out from Hell's Angels. Sure! Give the Tirailleurs the damned Lébels!

"Ol' pig-sticker's enough for me!" said Anzac Bill, laying his hand on the short stubby knife that every Légionnaire carries somewhere about him, "—till I get my paws on a good yataghan!" He and Di Piatti were superb swordsmen. Criswell opined that all *he* wanted was a beam ripped off some house, and Ike was thinking of rocks as good missiles for a fellow who once had pitched baseball. But over the rear wall they all presently dropped.

"Of course the blarsted fool's dead," Anzac Bill resumed as the squad moved investigatively along under the high rear wall of the *ksar*. "But we'll have a look at the Tirailleurs' old P. C. first, if you don't mind—eh, Top? That's where what's left of him will be."

Grunts of assent. Hell's Angels were listening, mostly, as they made knots in the direction of that alley at the corner of the *ksar*. It was all dark and deserted back here, every householder's door shut. But from the other side of the *ksar* came the tumult of the advancing mob, occasional enthusiastic whangs from long guns greeting the *ksar's* present inhabitants, shouts of command, venomous war-cries. Arrived at the corner, the glare of fires lit up all the

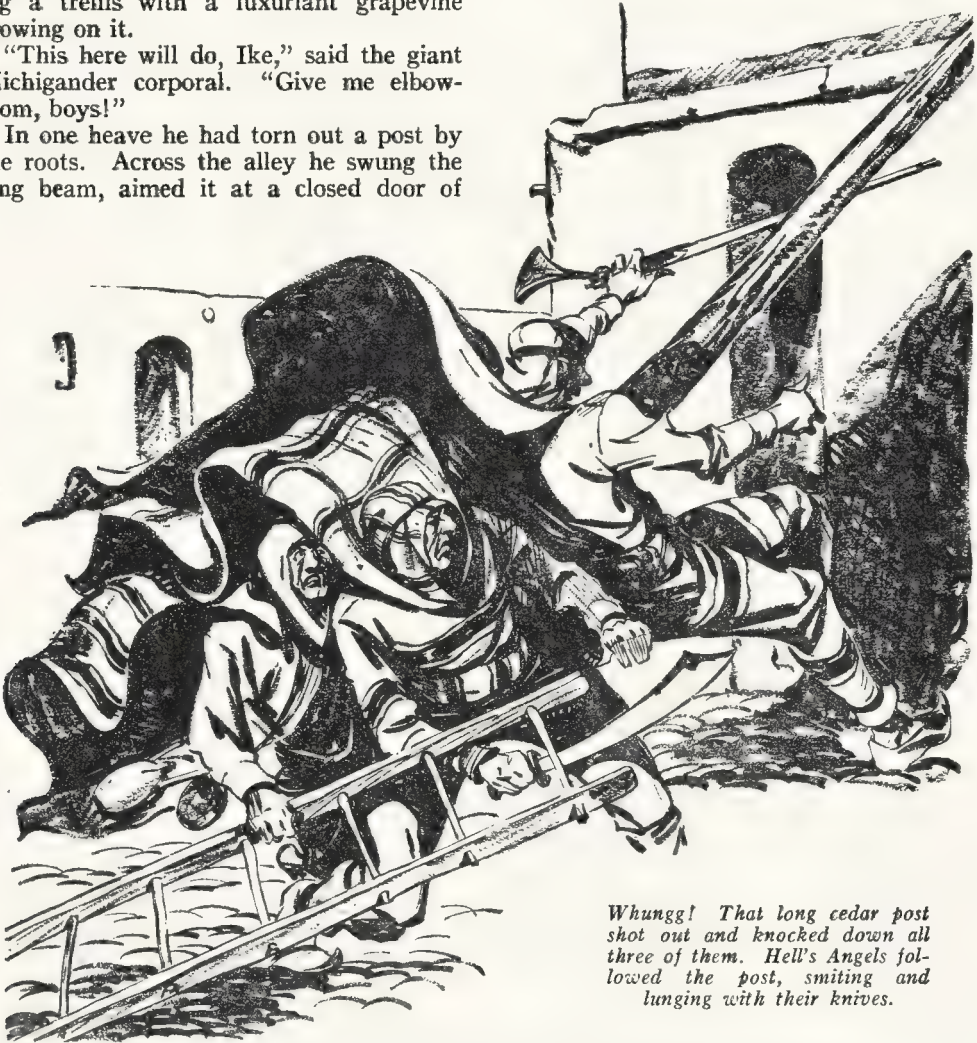
house roofs, the long lane terminating in the camel-market. A human tide had surged halfway up it already, dark domed heads silhouetted against the light, flash of steel, the etchings of ladders being carried aloft. Hell's Angels hurried down to meet it. They had no intention of engaging the forefront of that mob bare-handed; all they wanted was a convenient place for an ambush. . . . And then big Criswell stopped before a small café Maure in the alley. Its door was now barred, but in front of it rose two stout cedar posts bearing a trellis with a luxuriant grapevine growing on it.

"This here will do, Ike," said the giant Michigander corporal. "Give me elbow-room, boys!"

In one heave he had torn out a post by the roots. Across the alley he swung the long beam, aimed it at a closed door of

of an olive-oil earthenware lamp such as was used in Roman times and still is. A respectable old citizen stood there holding up his skinny arms and croaking anxiously as the Légion barged in and at once relieved him of the yataghan in his girdle and a long gun leaning against the wall.

"Peace! Peace! May Allah salute you!" protested the old fellow. "*Aiwa*—the town is full of Shaitans tonight! *En Allah yak-saf!* Shaitan himself was there, and laid



Whungg! That long cedar post shot out and knocked down all three of them. Hell's Angels followed the post, smiting and lunging with their knives.

some householder opposite the café. "Good place as any," he grunted; then—*wham!* that door flew in on its hinges, its wooden latch giving way like paper. They surged inside and were greeted by frightened cries of "*Amam! Amam!*" and the feeble light

waste the whole camel-market—these eyes saw it! So I came home, as a peaceful—"

THE rest could not understand his Arabic gabble, but Criswell could. "You saw it?" he encouraged, for this Satan-business



smelled of De Gaillac somehow. "Aiwa, from a roof-top," went on the patriarch excitedly. "Do I not know it was the Pelted Devil himself, for he flung mud

in balls, and—*crack! crack!*—he smote men with his fists. Blinded, falling, stumbling against each other, the camel-market was plowed through from side to side! And then, lo, holding a man in his teeth, the Devil came upon those who had taken the Roumi soldiers' rifles and drove them up an alley. Men shot—but who can wound the Evil One? These eyes saw it, I tell you!" he insisted vehemently. "Then he was on the roof-top and dropped down—among them out of the sky again—O day of misfortune!—and they fled before him and took refuge in the house—"

"What house?" asked Criswell brusquely.

"Nay, verily, the house that the soldiers had taken, across the camel-market from where I watched. And then there was rumor that our *ksar* was taken, and all left the camel-market to go storm it. *Aiwa!* The people be all crazy tonight! So I came

home. . . . *Ya Allah*, was not Shaitan himself, in a Roumi uniform, waiting before the door of that house and seeking to devour them as they came out? And he might—"

"Listen to this, fellers!" said Criswell, shutting off the talkative old beggar. "That fool De Gaillac's alive yet! Listen!" But he had hardly half translated the story of Satan beating up the camel-market before the *clop—clop!* of sandals and chatter of the mob close by down the alley below their door roused Hell's Angels into a predatory mood once more. They crouched in a body inside the door, Criswell with his battering ram poised for trouble. The leaders came abreast, one tall ruffian bearing a ladder-end on shoulder and a gleaming sword in his free hand, another with a long gun and draped all over with powder-gourds and bullet-boxes.

Whungg! That long cedar post shot out and knocked down all three of them. Hell's Angels followed the post, smiting and lunging with their knives. The sudden attack of this whole squad of uniformed *Légionnaires* had for its first effect a mad panic and a retrograde surge of the whole mass of townsmen, yells of terror, a riot to get away from there. Then they rallied; but Hell's Angels had armed themselves with everything they could lay hands on, and now were draining back into the house.

"Up the ladder, you birds!" ordered Ike, bringing up the rear guard. "We aint got no time to dally with these gents. Beat it along the roof-tops!"

HE was thinking of what Criswell had told them as he climbed up after the last man. That daring charge of De Gaillac's, it might quite well have succeeded, as driven through a mob already fighting

among themselves. And apparently he had got to the gang with the Tirailleurs' rifles, protecting himself to the last moment by the body of a slugged tribesman held in front of him. Then he had busted them with his sudden battering attack, too close for anyone to get in a shot at him—or had they? Anyway, they had given back around the corner of the Tirailleurs' P. C. and rallied up in the alley. The rest seemed to be that he had shot down at them from the roof of the P. C., where they crowded together in the alley below, and then, when they ran around to the door to rush in and get him, he had dropped off the wall and followed them and was now holding the lot prisoners in the P. C. One man outside a door can pretty well block it, if armed with both a rifle and a knockout punch! And it would be just like De Gaillac to think of closing the roof trapdoor before he dropped off that wall, too!

THAT much Ike had pieced out as they pounded along over the roof-tops. It was a broad and deserted lane, the flat roofs separated only by low parapets. Down in the alley they could hear the mob attacking the old fellow's house behind them. Over-shoulder rose silhouetted the *ksar*, ladders against its walls, Hortet and his people having a hot time defending it. But Hell's Angels had no time to even look at that fight. They were sure now they would see De Gaillac again when they came to the last house fronting on the camel-market at the end of this lane.

And they did. Reaching the end of the house roofs, Hell's Angels flung themselves prone behind the last parapet and peered over cautiously for a look-see. They were sketchily armed with two old flintlocks, a Zulu musket that had only one cartridge, and a couple of yataghans, so were in no hurry to jump down into trouble just yet.

"Pst!" said Anzac Bill. "There he is! And lord of the whole show, if you don't mind!"

The blazing piles of camel-fodder had been made into bonfires by the addition of *suk* shelves and street trellises torn down at random. The camel-market was still full of townsmen, watching in the glare of their light, motionless, fascinated apparently. None dared come within fifty yards of that immense bony figure in Légion uniform over there. De Gaillac leaned heavily against the wall of the Tirailleurs' P. C., just to one side of its dark and cavernous

door. He seemed weary and wounded, but the wall supported his shoulder, and both his long arms were crooked and ready for their next lunge. And leaning against the wall beyond him were already a long stand of Lébels gleaming in the firelight.

As they watched, a muzzle protruded cautiously through the door, and started to twist its aim sidewise. In a flash De Gaillac's right hand shot out, grabbed the muzzle, yanked. The man holding that rifle shot stumbling outward, received a terrific left to the jaw that sent him spinning into the square. "*Et quatorzel!*" boomed De Gaillac triumphantly at the watching crowd. "And fourteen!" He swept off his képi in an ironical salute and stacked the rifles with the others.

Howling, sardonic guffaws answered him. The Arab sense of humor is the keenest of his qualities. They appreciated this show, this mouse-trap that the lone Roumi was running. Ike gathered that, as the old man had said, De Gaillac had all that gang of Sultanites who had raided the Tirailleurs' P. C. shut up in it now; also that this audience in the camel-market must be all Caliphites or they would have attacked him long ago instead of laughing.

"Come on, guys!" said Ike and led the move to drop over the parapet. De Gaillac saw that uprising of fellow-Legionaries opposite and raised a big hand in protest. "*Non! Tout seule!* Behold, fourteen! I lack six. . . . And then—"*Je meurs!*" he declaimed in a terrible voice, and tore open his tunic. A red spot with a long trickle of blood below it was there, on the right of his thick chest.

"No!" said Jeff pityingly. "The bally *Quixote!* What say, Top? The blighter will bleed to death while we watch!"

JUST then three rifles appeared in a clump in the door, and there was fast and furious action. One of them nearly got through. But he made a fatal sidewise twist to fire his rifle point-blank into De Gaillac, and received a knockout as it exploded over his shoulder. The other two were already lying in the mud.

"*Dix-sept!*" proclaimed De Gaillac. Seventeen! The crowd roared, cackled, held their sides, and some of the more venturesome crept forward to secure the fallen Sultanites. De Gaillac leaned weakly against the wall. He needed a rest after that one! Only his diabolic will kept him ahead of that wound.

Hell's Angels dropped off the parapet. Ike was uncertain what to do. If they interfered, it might change all this into hostility again. The crowd was all for the lone Roumi. Its chivalry, its ironic sense of humor, its smoldering hate of the Sultanite party, dominated them now. De Gaillac had them all with him if let alone. The attack on the *ksar* uptown was dwindling, too, to a few sporadic shots. They all could hear that.

And then De Gaillac straightened up and

hostile glares upon the seven Légion soldiers back here again Allah knew how or why. "*Kill!*"—rose a shriek somewhere in the rear. Hands flew to knives in the girdles as Hell's Angels massed compactly.



The man received a terrific left to the jaw. "*Et quatorze!*" boomed De Gaillac triumphantly.

staggered into that black and smoking doorway! Hell's Angels held its breath, then moved swiftly over through the throng of burnouses. Could you beat it for daring? Ike saw what was back of that last desperate venture. De Gaillac could not wait for any more rifles, for his wound was pressing him. There were only three left in there. His strength would only last out this final smashing attack.

They had nearly crossed the market when De Gaillac reappeared. "*Et vingt!*" they heard him gasp hoarsely; then collapsed over his armful of three more rifles.

A SHOUT went up from the crowd. The lion was down! For a moment it all hung in the balance. There were renewed

But the shriek had roused De Gaillac out of his swoon. He rose to his feet once more, lurched up with his back to the wall.

"*Non! . . . Not yet!*" Up rose that dominant right hand of his once more, and the crowd recoiled. "Remains—to restore order. *À moi, la Légion!*" he thundered.

Ike took the hint, and in one bound Hell's Angels had reached those rifles and was facing about in a line with them leveled. And it was then that giant Criswell, who spoke Arabic, rose superbly to the occasion. "*Ye loyal to the Caliph!*" he thundered. "*Pouah!* One against twenty—yet they could not prevail!" He waved a hand over the Sultanites lying in the mud around the P. C. door. "*Cowards! Down with the usurper, Sultan Belkacem!*"

Cyrano of the Legion

It was enough! Ksarine Fougani went into its last internal spasm, then and there. There was riot, brief and decisive, then pursuit into the Sultanite part of the town. Ranks of bayonets debouching into the market out of an alley told Ike that Hortet had been quick to follow up his repulse of the mob. His Tirailleurs were already breaking formation, headed by Lodève, to recover their rifles and their own P. C.

Then all paused. For Ike and his squad were standing now at silent salute, hands to képi visors, all facing a lone and gigantic figure that still stood with its back to the wall and feet braced out, but the head hung weakly on one shoulder. De Gaillac had passed out, quietly, still braced on his feet, some unconscious remnant of an iron will still holding the muscles to their work. An ear over his heart had told Jeff that it no longer beat. And then the silent tableau of a Légion farewell. . . .

"*Morbleu!*" growled Hortet, coming up. "Our poor ribald devil of a Gascon?"

"'Twas him done it!" husked Ike, indicating the stand of rifles. "All alone. Must of took a spent bullet through one of them hosstyles. . . . Twenty of 'em, and him with his bare fists! . . . No, he's gone."

They all jumped to catch the body which had suddenly slumped down limply. Hortet was the first to receive it in his arms.

"*Et voilà!*" he said after a silence. "Our Cyrano, *hein?* It is good that the Army sees one now and then, lest it forgets! *La chivalrie!*—the iron soul who scorns! . . . Oh, *mon Dieu!* But it is as he would have wished, no?" the old zouzou ended.

"*Voilà*, his present to you, messieurs!" he added bitterly to the Tirailleurs with a glance at their rifles. "And to us—the memory inspiring. . . . I close your eyes, *mon brave*. *Voilà*—the end that the Légion adores!"

THEY buried him in the desert town of Ksarine Fougani. The general staff never learned the exact details of how that partisan town became suddenly all Caliphite, the first to be won over in the turbulent Tafilelt. But Knecht knew, and he raised a subscription in the battalion for a monument to their Gascon's memory. It simply says:

A BARON HENRI DE GAILLAC, HEROS.
Mort pour la Patrie
1929

It is not often that the Légion acknowledges any man a hero.

This quaint and picturesque story of wild doings in the hill country will divert you in true Mark Twain fashion.



SHERIFF CORBLING had to hang a man—Purview Devole, who had killed one of the Pounds—and he had trouble getting deputies to help him. On the street a young mountaineer stopped the Sheriff, asking him to buy a hog.

"Yo' talk sellin' me hawgs—*today?* I got to hang a man tomorrow!" the Sheriff snarled.

"I don't care if you hang ten men tomorrow, providing you buy my two hogs this evening."

"Ho, law! Who-all are you, anyhow?"

"James Morrell."

"Relation to Parson Slow-poke Morrell?"

"Yes suh—his third son, suh."

"Aint been called to preach, have you?"

"No suh; one-of us boys had to keep

The Mountain Sheriff

By RAYMOND
S. SPEARS



Illustrated by W. O. Kling

On the instant all three leaped from dreams of captivity into the wakefulness of grim realization.

peace in some circuit congregations. As I had a quarrelsome disposition when I was a boy, naturally I grew up into disciplinarian at meetings—relieving my pap, suh.”

“I wonder—” Corbling hesitated. “Supposin’ I ’pointed you dep’ty sheriff, reception-committee posse duty, and bought those hogs, would you accept?”

Eventually Morrell accepted; and he helped in the hanging before he found out that the hangee was a relative of his sweetheart Ruby Devole. Naturally that got Morrell into trouble with Ruby; indeed he kept getting into trouble, for he was present at the Picnic House dance when Doug Pound was killed in a fight by some one from outside; and it was up to Deputy Morrell to find out who did the shooting. The Pounds, of course, were convinced that some Devole did it; moreover, Danson Devole was known to be suffering from bullet-wounds. And in town shortly afterward

the two clans would have shot it out had not this same James Morrell again acted as disciplinarian and interfered. (*The story continues in detail:*)

IT was the Pounds’ turn to move, and on a soft moonlight night in falling-leaf time Deck Devole, Luke Arkey and Freehold Devole were going up over Misty Ridge about ten o’clock. They had been to court some girls down on Meeting-house Branch, but without much success. Accordingly the boys had started home early.

They were scuffling along in the thick dry leaves, whistling, cracking jokes with one another, and acting more humorous than they felt, when Freehold, who had always been just a little queer that-a-way, suddenly stopped and stood rigid, listening.

“I b’lieve I felt something!” he said in a low, serious voice.

“What’d you feel?” Deck asked.

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"Well, maybe I heard it." Freehold shook his head morosely. "I don't know what it was. All I know is—"

He stood looking around into the scatterings of culled oak forest. Clusters of dark laurels were lying against the side-hill slope. There were the dead tops of trees which had been cut down for logs. The trees still standing were gnarly, crooked, broken-top hollow trunks, the loggers having taken away the good lumber stuff and left only weeds to grow on that part of Misty Mountain ridges.

After two or three minutes Freehold started on up the two-rut mountain road toward Sparkling Gap. His shoulders were humped over, and his head bowed forward, his hands in his coat pockets. He scuffled through the light, dry leaves which had fallen, going in and out of the soft misty shadows of the bright moon against the trees and the flocks of leaves still clinging to the twigs in the woods canopy. Luke Arkey followed ten or twelve feet behind, whistling "Cumberland Gap." Deck Devole thought he heard something—probably a flock of roosting wild turkeys—over to one side; so he stood still, trying to strain that sound from the noise his companions were making. Fifty yards behind, he followed along at his leisure.

SPARKLING GAP consisted of two walls of water-cut, moss-and-vine-hung limestone ledges. Where springs wet the rounded convolutions of rock, the moon shone bright in reflections; hence the name "Sparkling." The bottom of the Gap was only ten or twelve feet wide for a hundred feet or so, and then on the northwest side, toward which the three were heading, the slope rounded over the summit down hardwood-grown gentle declivities into the rich bottoms where the Devoles mostly lived.

Freehold seemed almost to hurry through the split in the mountain-top. Arkey followed with increasing strides on the downgrade. Deck, well in the rear and in the dark shadow of the ledges, sauntered after in no particular hurry.

As the two in the lead emerged into the brighter moonlight of the open side-hill on their right, behind them up the side of the mountain in some low laurels four men suddenly rose to their feet, cocking shoulder weapons noisily with metallic clicks. Freehold threw up his head like a startled horse, partly turning. Arkey turned and shrank away, lifting his hands. Then a shower of

lead roared down the 'grade, bullet and buckshot blows staggering the two so that they swayed and stumbled on for a few steps through the leaves.

Deck Devole was out of sight of the bushwhackers, but he could see the four men silhouetted against the pale white of the moonlit sky. On the instant he stood surprised, stunned by that utterly unexpected—though he realized Freehold might have foreseen it—murderous attack.

Happily, Deck was wearing a thirty-two-caliber revolver on a forty-five-caliber frame, both for purpose of adornment and self-defense. He pulled this weapon from a new scabbard, jerking it out with some difficulty, for the inside of the holster had not yet been properly oiled with tallow to slick it. As he struggled with the weapon, he watched the falling cascade of burned powder from the muzzles of the weapons murdering his cousins. Presently he was all clear, and began to shoot with enthusiastic accuracy.

The second killer from the right was hit in the back and pitched over into the laurels. The other inside man of the line was knocked forward so that he went striding in front of the shotgun muzzle of the man on his right, just in time to catch a charge of shot in the back of his head. The two remaining shooters looked around wildly. Deck had another clear shot which creased one of the two across the legs, and he lit out stepping high and fast. Left all alone amid unknown perils, the fourth man clubbed his shotgun and with a yell began to run down the mountain too—with Deck after him, shooting and reloading his revolver when it was empty.

The echoes of the shooting were followed by those from the bushwhacker who was running, yelping excitedly at every jump. But he went so much faster than Deck that he escaped, despite bullets aimed to intercept the sounds. Presently the man in flight was out of hearing, and Deck stood on a shoulder of the mountain with his revolver, its muzzle too hot to touch, in his hand as he gasped for breath.

"I won the battle!" he choked. "I won the battle!"

TAKING his bearings, he tried to find his way back to the Gap, but he had crossed hollows and circled around outlying knobs. He could tell direction by the moon, but that didn't help him any now, as he couldn't remember which way he had



The fourth man began to run down the mountain, with Deck after him, shooting.

circled; nor could he recognize any of the places he could distinguish around him. He had hunted 'coon and 'possum here about a thousand times at night, and oftener he had been after wild turkeys, squirrels, deer and other game up this old mountain—Misty Ridges—but he was lost.

Sweating, chilled, clammy with the aftermath of excitement and fears, he went stumbling sometimes up and sometimes down grade, trying to return to where his cousins had been shot before his eyes. The moon set after a while, leaving him edging along the brink of a precipice and likely to fall over at any moment, should a pawpaw pull out by the roots or a stone roll from under his foot.

At last he looked down a terrifically steep slope like a slide-bank. Something rustled, and he recognized the sound of frosty-leaved corn-shocks. He had come to a side-hill cultivated field. Sure enough, he could see the shape of a cabin down on the bottom, with a pink spot of glow where the red coals of a fire shone up a chimney on the blue thin smoke of a smoldering wood chunk.

Dead tired, Deck clung where he sat, shivering with the reaction from his fight.

"I don't know if they're friendly or not!" he said to himself. "It's likely they are, but I don't know who 'tis—it mightn't be friends or relations!"

Accordingly he waited through what seemed ages of gloom. He saw the pink glow begin to brighten with the flare of flames.

"They're stirrin' ouf!" he told himself. "They're kindling the fire!"

He heard a rooster crow and the shuffling of an animal coming out of the corn, heading for its den in the woods—probably a 'coon. The beast passed close by, but Deck paid no attention, he was so eagerly trying to make out the landmarks to identify this cabin to which he had come in that V-notched mountain side.

Sure enough, it was a friendly valley. It was Danson Devole's own house! Still, Deck had no regrets for delaying. Now he scrambled down, and hailing from the fence, received from within a cautious answer.

"Hit's Deck!" the visitor shouted. "Deck Devole—"

"Deck! What yo' coming in this time o' mornin' for? Be'n 'coon hunting?" the voice of Danson inquired as the front door opened.

"We was bushwhacked, Danson!" Deck cried, stumbling through the frantic pack of welcoming dogs. "They shot Luke Arkey an' Freehold when we come through Sparkling Gap—I chased one who got away—I got lost—"

"Shot Luke an' Freehold, Deck?" Danson rose with difficulty from the chair in which he was sitting. "Shu-u! I knowed those Pounds'd strike back, Deck. The war's begun! An'-dog-gone—I'm all stiff from those automatics!"

"I got to go back—I want a horse, Danson!"

"Drink some coffee firstest—I'll ride with yo' if hit's the last thing I do!" Danson declared. "We'll go by Freehold's house. I'll send out some one to stir up the relations!"

FOUR boys went scurrying away to rouse the Devoles to the shooting which had been done. They all met at the foot of the ridge down which the road came out of the Sparkling Gap, and spreading out in wide-flung skirmish line, they went swiftly but carefully to the scene of the ambush.

They found Freehold lying face down where he had pitched full length and slid a few feet headlong down the mountain, dead. Luke Arkey was hit in seven places, but still lived. Of the enemy they found one dead with a thirty-two-caliber bullet-hole in the shoulder, and the top of his head blown off by a charge of buckshot at six feet—from his own companion's shotgun. The other three were gone.

"I don't think much of that thirty-two-twenty!" Danson turned to Deck. "If yo'd had a forty-five-caliber they would neveh have got away!"

"But I neveh could shoot a forty-five straight!" Deck exclaimed.

Danson shrugged his shoulders, making no further comment.

CARRYING Freehold's body and the wounded Luke Arkey, the Devoles headed down the mountain, having sent two messengers to Otter-house Court for a surgeon. Rendering such first aid as they knew, the clan waited at Hiram Devole's house. Dr. Heyder arrived shortly after one o'clock and went right to work, but there was nothing much he could do. Arkey died about three o'clock, with the Devole men standing around his bed. . . .

Almost on that tragic instant Sheriff Corbling, Undersheriff Hiltons and five deputies galloped swiftly into the branch bottom, where they tied their sweaty, blowing horses at the end of the line of the Devole saddle-animals along the front fence. Corbling, Hiltons and Deputy Morrell went over the fence-blocks and into the log cabin, where they gazed at the bed where lay Freehold covered, and then turned to the other bed in mid-floor, where Dr. Heyder stood wiping his brow, shaking his head helplessly as Arkey's mother, on her knees, clutched him as she begged him to save the life of her boy—who was already gone.

The posse's arrival stilled her cries, dulling them into suppressed chokings and gaspings. The men turned from their dead to look at the Government officials, sullen and glowering. There was no greeting,

nothing but the hard staring of resentment and rebuff.

"What happened?" Corbling asked, not without pity and understanding in his tone. "Tell me about it, Danson!"

"Course, we know yo' mean well, Sheriff," Danson replied civilly. "But this yere's our own private business. *The Devoles don't ask no he'p from the law or anybody. An' we don't aim to have outsiders interfere with our personal affairs, no suh."

"Course, you'd feel that-away," Corbling assented. "At the same time—whoever takes the law in his own hands is guilty, same as those who start trouble. Whoever did these killings ought to be hung legal, instead of murdered private, the killers prob'ly gettin' away, the innocent suf'ring."

"Theh aint no innocents among them Pounds!" Danson declared angrily.

"Then they were Pounds who killed those boys?" Corbling exclaimed quickly. "Where did it happen?"

Danson Devole turned his head, chagrined, angry that the quick-witted Sheriff had obtained evidence despite the determination not to help the officers in any way or manner. Presently he spoke.

"We aint none of us anything to say," Danson said, drawing himself stiffly but determinedly to his full height. The exertion was too much for him. The course of one of his pistol-bullet wounds opened, and the pain was so keen that he sagged to the floor in a dark faint.

"He's be'n overexertin' hisse'f too much," some one apologized for their leader's weakness, lifting him to another bed. "He oughtn't to have ridden today. We told him so, but he wouldn't listen."

DEPUTY MORRELL went outside, where he found one of the young Devole boys fondly cleaning a revolver with excessive care. Morrell sat on his heel in the sunny corner of the big cribbed-up fireplace at the cabin end, and praised the accuracy of a thirty-two-twenty on a forty-five-caliber frame, with an eight-inch barrel.

"Yas suh," the boy assented. "Yas suh—hit sho' done the business up in Sparklin' Gap las' night! If Deck hadn't held back, listenin' to sleepy wild turkeys, they'd got him too. As it was, he was behind in the shadows, an' flanked 'em. Reckons he hit three out of four what done the bush-whacking. My lan', he sho' was brave!"

One's sho'-nough daid, head blown to smash when Deck's bullet flung him in front of their own shotgun—Sing-low's, Deck reckons. Two went down, an' Deck chased t'other—Sing-low Pound, prob'ly—plumb down the mountang end, two mile or lots further, shootin' ev'ry jump! Hit was a big battle, but not the las' one. Two that's wounded got away, though."

"I bet the boys had been courtin'," Morrell remarked, whittling a stick casually.

"Yas suh—oveh to the Nillons on Meeting-house Branch. On the way up the mountang, Freehold stopped, like he knowed somethin' was goin' to happen. Deck'd been leading. Freehold went ahead. Sho' nuff, the four Pounds riz up out the laurels on the right-han' side the trace. They begun to bang, an' the fire water-falled out their guns. Shu-u! Deck was back in the shadow. My lan', he was brave! He pulled an' let go, one against four! An' he hit three, yes suh! Danson's real provoked, though. He neveh did like a thirty-two-twenty—too small. Deck an' he've been arguing all the mornin' which is best—to miss with a forty-five or hit easy with a thirty-two-twenty. Danson aint no patience with anybody can't shoot straight with a forty-five anyhow."

"Joe-Tom!" a shrill woman's voice interrupted. "Who yo' talkin' to? What'd Danson say 'bout keeping yo' mouth shut to sheriffers?"

"Aw—sho', Maw! Hones'—I plumb fo'got, cleanin' Deck's gun!"

"That's all right, Mrs. Devoles!" Morrell assured her. "I just wanted to know—personal."

"Yeh—yo' aint going to reception-committee no more Devoles to a hangin', no indeedy! They'll die to the breeches of their guns, first!" the woman declared angrily.

"I expect!" Morrell sighed, heading down toward the horses at the fence rails.

AFTER a time Sheriff Corbling and Undersheriff Hiltons came down to make the posse into a disconsolate group.

"They wont even tell where the shooting was!" Corbling whispered.

"It was in Sparkling Gap," Morrell said. "Four Pounds held up three Devoles boys who had been courting the Nillon girls over in Meeting-house Branch bottoms. Deck was behind and hit three of the bush-whackers. One got away—Deck thinks it was Sing-low Jack Pound. One was killed

—wounded and flung in front of a shotgun, and his head was blown off by one of their own guns, prob'ly Sing-low's own twelve-gauge. I don't expect the Devoles'll count that one, because of Deck only wounding him. Deck thought he had two others, but they were gone when the Devoles went up there this morning. That provoked Danson right smart, because Deck was using only a thirty-two-twenty instead of a forty-five."

"How'd you get all that information—first hand?" Corbling demanded in surprise.

"No suh—hearsay, course. One of Hiram's boys, Joe-Tom, was cleaning Deck's thirty-two around the end the cabin by the fireplace chimney. He talked real liberal, what he'd heard around. We'd better go up to Sparkling Gap, maybe."

"I expect," Corbling hesitated. "I tell you, Morrell, you hang around here and see if you can't learn some more."

"Course, I will," Morrell assented, "but one of the Devoles women heard Joe-Tom telling me. She gave him billy-blixon. He shut up like a cork into a bottle. Course, they might think I knowed too much already."

"But you'd stay if I said so?" Corbling asked curiously.

"Course."

"Well, I aint going to let you." Corbling shook his head, determinedly. "I aint ready to lose you yet. Come on, boys! We'll go look at Sparkling Gap."

"Huh—they know where 't happened!" Hiltons heard Hiram Devoles say, as he stood near by. "Somebody must have blabbed!"

Hiltons, with ready wit and his hand beside his mouth, whispered back:

"The Poundses done complained on you already!"

"Now, aint that like them scoundrels!" Deck exclaimed.

"Hiltons," Corbling asked when they were up the road, "what'd you tell that lie for?"

"Well," Hiltons answered, wriggling uncomfortably, "I figured we might get those families to informing and squealing on each other, if we could get them mad enough."

"Well—yes, that's so, we might." Corbling considered the matter for a time in thoughtful silence, and then he said: "But I don't know about that, either. Seems to me they're plenty mad enough as it is, the way they are cuttin' up! But I don't

reckon we can he'p it now. Same time, as a general thing, I don't expect we better stir things up any worse'n they are, lying or otherwise."

Hiltons colored, dropping back from beside his chief. The Undersheriff was partly ashamed and partly indignant.

"I b'lieve in taking advantage of anything we can do in these hill meannesses," he told Deputy Morrell who was trailing quite a way behind the others in the posse.

"Well, between us," Morrell confessed, "so do I!"

SHERIFF CORBLING'S posse found the dead victim of accidental cross-fire in the laurels where the bushwhackers had waited to waylay the Devole boys in Sparkling Gap. They found where two men had dragged themselves away, leaving stains from Deck Devole's thirty-two-caliber projectiles. After a time the wounded men had reached the top of the Divide, where their tracks vanished in dry leaves, though the trailers could tell they were heading out of the Misty Ridges toward the Pound country in the Beauty Mountains.

Over in the Gap they found where Deck braced himself, spreading his feet in the damp earth, and then strode forward as he shot. Then he had begun to run lightly and with increasing leaps, pausing to drop out six thirty-two-twenties, and then had taken sliding plunges down the mountain like hog-nose rooting through acorn and chestnut leaves for mast. Down yonder on a mossy rock point Deck had stood emptying his gun into the gloom below, then had turned, trying to head the enemy again.

"Looks like Danson oughta be satisfied with what Deck done!" Undersheriff Hiltons remarked.

"When a man's head of a family, he has to demand complete results," Corbling replied. "In these battles half-killing an enemy isn't any satisfaction. 'Taint homicide an' 'taint inaction. Hit's kind o' betwixt and between. In court, felonious assault cases generally get a hung jury, which aint revenge and aint coming clear."

"They got two of the Devoles," Morrell remarked. "Looks like we could bring Sing-low in for that!"

"We'll leave hit to the prosecutor," Corbling said. "This case aint a clean, one-sided killing. Here lies one of the Pounds, dead. Two got away wounded, according to the indications. Sing-low Jack's plumb

sure to plead self-defense. This is a free country. He'll say they were coming home from 'coon-hunting, when first they knew, somebody opened fire on them, and course, they had to shoot to protect themselves. One's daid, two wounded, and if we're put on the stand by the defense, we'll have to swear that in the heat of passion Deck Devole chased Sing-low Jack right clean off the mountain. Course we *know* the Pounds were bushwhacking the Devoles. Same time, when a jury goes into the box, it don't know a blamed thing except what the court agrees to letting the prosecution and the defense inform them. Well, we better tote this carcass down the mountang 'fore it gets dark. We'll borrow a wagon on the way."

So they carried the dead man clear into the County Court. A good many people came down to look at him in Dugales' furniture-store mortuary, but he remained unidentified. Sheriff Corbling telephoned to Lon-Ed Pound about the matter. Lon-Ed said they didn't care for the dead man. He wasn't one of the family, but a fellow who just happened along out of the logging camps. He agreed to go with the boys 'coon-hunting, for ten dollars. He was a stranger—name was Hackber, or something like that. Anyhow, the Pounds would let the public look after his remains.

"All right!" Sheriff Corbling exclaimed. Among his deputies he was pretty frank in saying how small he thought the Pounds were, imposing that expense on the State. At the same time, Lon-Ed Pound showed plainly enough what Sing-low Jack's defense, if needed, would be. The Pounds had claimed they were just 'coon-hunting. Either they'd consulted their attorneys or they had figured out their defense mighty close beforehand. In any event they had taken advantage of the very circumstances to which the Sheriff had already astutely alluded.

Deputy Sheriff Morrell listened with keenest interest to the remarks and suggestions which came to his ears.

"I had no idea it was so complicated, sheriffing!" he thought to himself.

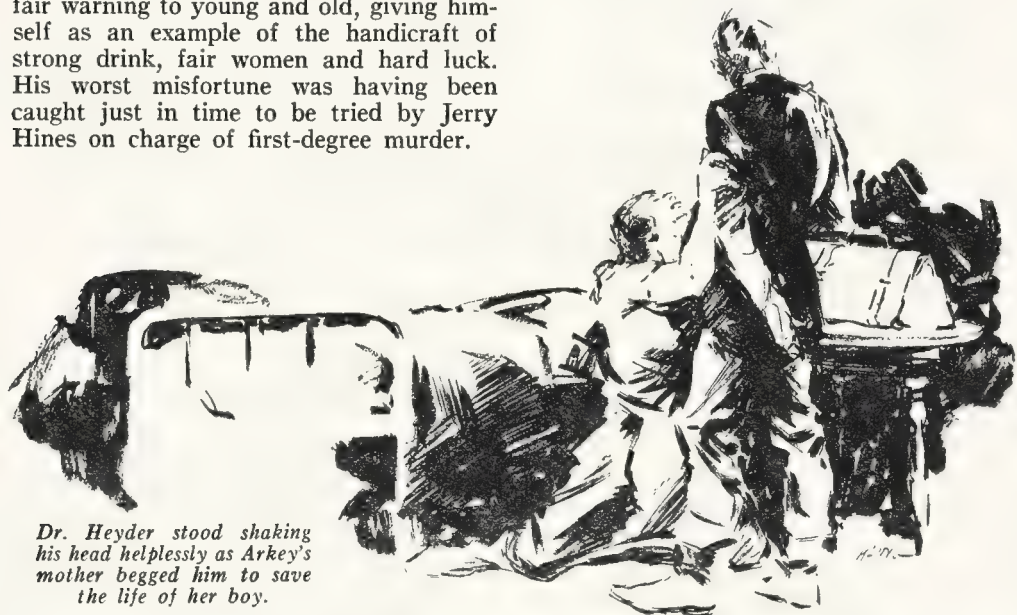
CHAPTER VII

PEOPLE in Otter-house County all felt pretty nervous on account of the Devoles and Pounds being at it. A certain degree of expectancy had been endured

ever since the talking stage, when the Devoles began to feel their numerical and property importance. Some had, of course, remained reasonable, but Purview Devole had begun to Smart Alec' right smart till he found himself writing the conventional post-conviction poem describing his life and composing his pre-execution poem of fair warning to young and old, giving himself as an example of the handicraft of strong drink, fair women and hard luck. His worst misfortune was having been caught just in time to be tried by Jerry Hines on charge of first-degree murder.

could conduct their commercial transactions to their own content. Pietro was foreign but regular. A great joker.

Now, if anyone in the world could be more neutral than Pietro Mistronio, no imagination in the Pound neighborhood could fancy him. The buyer came and



Dr. Heyder stood shaking his head helplessly as Arkey's mother begged him to save the life of her boy.

Of course if the war-fighters would only shoot one another, and their bullets flew no farther than the fringes of their relationships, nobody need worry. The trouble was soon emphasized, as regards neutrals. Mr. Pietro Mistronio, a person who spoke with a foreign accent, but at that an interesting line of talk, was going over into Beauty Mountain with a view to do some business with certain persons generally believed to be members of the Pound family, by marriage or blood. With him was Tuck Pound, a right smart and clever boy whose accompaniment of Mr. Mistronio identified the business man as reliable and friendly. Tuck's father Dred Pound was known to be forehanded and industrious, owning a grist mill at the Three-way Fork of Singing Creek. If people knew when they were well off, they didn't go up any one of those three branches into the steep and narrow gullies and coves against the rugged mountain side of Old Beauty itself.

Pietro Mistronio had entered into commercial relations with Dred Pound, who always sent Tuck to guide the buyer in, and then while Tuck watched, the two men

went free as the air. The companionship of Tuck was merely a matter of courtesy, a form begun under the necessities, lest a lone stranger make local people think something and act accordingly. Just precisely in the same way Mr. Mistronio had become familiar in the Misty Ridge country where Tad Devole or other boys met to accompany him to the counters of similar transactions in like wares. . . .

Pietro Mistronio as usual had started back into the Beauty Mountain region with Tuck Pound. About two miles below the Three-way Fork of Singing Creek where Dred's house stood, the highway wound along the foot of a steep slope right at the meeting edges of the bottom clearings and the mountain woods. Little Fish, a spring run, flowed down a deep ravine, across the level mouth of which the roadway cut in the open for a hundred yards, a small iron bridge on high abutments making a hump in the trail.

THE night was bright, clear starlit, frosty with late autumn, and right fresh indeed. The fast truck passed a sloping point

covered with brush and gnarled timber on the side toward the woods—and then both heavy-duty pneumatic tires blew out with terrific explosions, like dynamite.

"Dog-gone!" Tuck swore, just like that, applying the brakes. "Theh goes two tires an' I've on'y got one spare! Must of hit something!"

Mistrionio swung down alongside the machine while Tuck set the emergency and turned off the motor, coming down on the off side and starting around the rear. Just as he reached the end of the machine, a fusillade of small arms roared.

"Bushwhacks!" Tuck gasped, crouching and edging back, realizing that he was out of sight of the assassins.

Crouched there, bullets and buckshot rattling against the body of the car, the boy froze motionless, for an instant dazed; he could see the yellowish reflections of gunflashes, hear the working of repeater mechanism, catch the low yelps of savage satisfaction, a voice rising clear:

"That's him!"

Tuck never thought a thing about that exclamation's significance. He just saw under the truck that his passenger, after standing for a lengthy moment steadied against the rear fender of the truck, fell to his knees, and clutching at just the air, pitched down on his face, like a huddled-up rabbit.

"Time fo' me to git!" Tuck gasped, and turning, keeping the truck between him and the men on the point in the brush, he dashed to plunge into the run bed.

His calculation wasn't very good, for suddenly fire was opened on him; but he darted into the brush and raced away, jumping from side to side like a deer dodging shots. Thus, muskratting and foxing, he made his escape.

He never knew till he arrived home that he was hit in two places by thirty-thirty bullets—shot easy once in the right leg, and the other time in the left side, cutting the bend of a rib.

THE tire blowouts and gunfire had roused the country. Dred Pound heard it, and suffered a lot of anxiety about Tuck and Pietro, who were expected any minute. Dred didn't know whether he ought to rally to the rescue, going right down the creek where the firing was going on, or if he'd better stay to home, dying at the breech of his rifle if necessary to protect himself, his mill, the approaches to the three private

businesses up the Three-way Forks, and his family. He decided not to be precipitate, and presently the arrival of Tuck, dripping creek-water stained with his own blood, relieved his family feelings.

"Where's Mistrionio?" Dred asked.

"He pitched right forward onto his face," Tuck said. "I seen 'im drag himself kind o' together, like a hit skurrel. He neveh said nothing."

"Actin' that-a-way, he's prob'ly daid," Dred mused. "We betteh not go down theh tonight. I'll send Mary-Jane oveh to Sing-low Jack's. Theh aint so liable to shoot a lady as a man. She can wear that blue dress of hern, which'll flap in the wind, an' they'll be sure to know 'taint a man. Sing-low can call in the reserves, an' tomorrow we'll throw out pickets and get down to business. Course, that's the Devoles tribe—"

"It mout be revenuers?" Tuck suggested brightly, as his mother and sisters dressed his wounds.

"Well, it mout be—but still, they don't gen'ly take an up-bound conveyance." The more experienced father shook his head. "If it'd been yo' was loaded an' goin' t'other way down an' out, it'd been an even chancet it was Federals. My land! I don't know what we're goin' to do 'f Pietro Mistrionio's actually killed up. Hit'd be a good joke on the Devoles if they done this meanness. They need him as much as we do, specially now we got the heavy expense of buyin' artillery, ammunition an' doctor-bills!"

"Yo'd think them Devoles 'd be careful, wouldn't yo', Pap?" Tuck suggested. "Exceptin' Uncle Elra, they's only scratched us. Course, that feller out the lumber camps was killed, but he wa'n't a Pound. They don't know yit if they hit any of us up in Sparkling Gap, do they?"

"Hit's a fam'ly secret, fo' a fact," Dred chuckled. "A Pound always could keep his mouth shut. I reckon that's account of us neveh havin' no lawyers er preachers into the fam'ly. Course, them professional fellers don't talk, keeping secrets pretty reliably, generally speaking. But at the same time us plain mountain folks mind ouh own business, keeps ouh own counsel an' expaicts othehs to do the same."

"I bet them Devoles'll wish they'd used blank shoots if Pietro Mistrionio's daid, don't you, Pap?" Tuck inquired eagerly.

"I expaict," Dred answered absently. "Yo' betteh git to sleep 'fore them bullet-

holes git to achin' an' smarty. I got some figurin' to do. If yo'd jes' run around the otheh side the truck, likely yo' wouldn't of got hit at all. Then I could rely on yo' if we git attackted any more tonight!"

Tuck gulped, turned over and sighed. He felt rebuked and mean. When would he learn not to talk so much, even inside

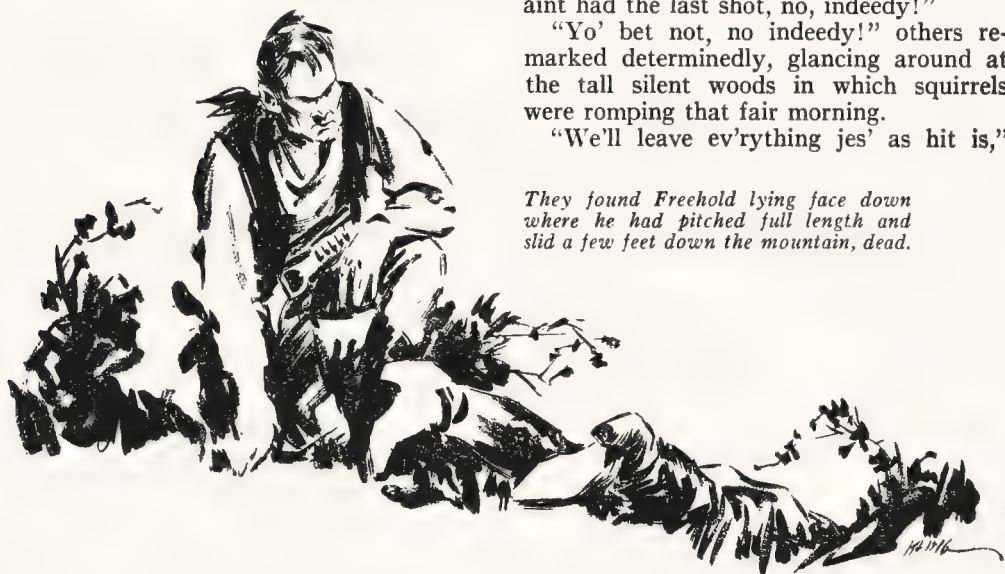
tell yo', not counting the violation of it, that'll hurt business. Prob'ly I'll have to shut down, account of not havin' a market any more."

"An' Mistronio's been buyin' their'n, too!" Sing-low Jack shook his head. "That's one thing, hit'll cripple their finances as much as hit will oun. They aint gained no advantage yet. And they aint had the last shot, no, indeedy!"

"Yo' bet not, no indeedy!" others remarked determinedly, glancing around at the tall silent woods in which squirrels were romping that fair morning.

"We'll leave ev'rything jes' as hit is,"

They found Freehold lying face down where he had pitched full length and slid a few feet down the mountain, dead.



the family? But anyhow, having two bullet hits through one was something.

IN the morning, Pounds assembled at Dred Pound's gristmill and house. The minute Sing-low Jack heard how things were, he sent out to bring the Pound men together, equipped and ready for business. With nineteen of them, the leader headed down the creek to see what had happened at the spring run known as Little Fish. Sure enough, Pietro Mistronio was dead, pretty badly shot to pieces. They examined the truck-tires to see what had happened to them.

"Look't that!" Dred Pound exclaimed. "Two tires, practically new, cut right plumb in two, an' ruined. Them Devoles aint satisfied with shootin' people; they got to go an' destroy valuable property!"

"It was a dirty trick!" Sing-low Jack admitted. "Smart, though—they took two old saw blades an' laid 'em edge up so's the tire'd hit 'em square on the teeth."

"Just supposin' some neutral'd come along instead of us! They'd tore their tires, just the same!" Dred said wrathfully. "An' then they up an' killed Mistronio. I

Sing-low Jack went on. "Yo' wont be needin' the truck, anyhow, Dred. I wouldn't run hit on a bare rim, if I was you, account of stone-bruising the wheels. Hit'd knock 'em out the true."

"I kin put on the spare. I can wrap the otheh rim with hick'ry withes an' cover 'em up with the slip-chains, 'nough to git the truck home, if I can't find a new tire ready to Otter-house Court. If Tuck hadn't been shot up, I'd send him. I don't expect if he met any Devoles down theh that they'd shoot him. Course—one of us legals they might—I don't know. Depend on if any authorities was around whether they'd notice us."

"Now I tell yo', that's figuring!" Pasque Pound declared, admiringly, proud of his family thinkers.

The two leaders, financial and war, pretended not to hear, but they stood a bit straighter and set their jaws and eyes into firmer lines, just to keep up appearances according to what they were.

Looking around, they could see where the bullets had raked into the ground, and there were several holes and a splash or two of lead in the wooden and metal parts

of the automobile truck, but only the tires showed real damage. The axles were proved to be mighty good stuff, for they had both turned bullets, or at least buck-shot, posy-splashes of lead showing as plain as could be where the missiles had glanced. One bullet had gone through the windshield, which might mean right poor shooting, missing the two intended victims by the rear wheel, or it might have been a bullet thrown on suspicion that some one was left on the driver's seat.

Up where the bushwhackers had awaited the confusion of their victims, when the tires blew on the cross-cut saw blades, the Pounds found a lot of empty shells, thirty-thirties, forty-five-caliber revolver, and about a dozen red twelve-gauge shotgun cases, ten-rodgers by trade name. The examiners touched none of these evidences, leaving that to the authorities, who would be coming presently and hurriedly.

SURE enough, a look-out down on Orchard Knob saw a rider coming and signaled the relatives, who had decided after all to hang around and see what the Government was going to do about this killing of a stranger. Long before the rider was to be identified, the observers recognized the tall sorrel with black mane and tail. That was one of the fancy Slow-poke Morrell line breed of horses—and it meant Deputy Sheriff James Morrell was heading the posse in.

He dashed up the road to the Spring-run flat and swung down as the horse leaned back, scraping his hoofs in a sudden stop. Morrell nodded gravely to acquaintances and then gazed at the man lying dead beside the rear truck-wheel.

"Look what they done to my tires, too!" Dred Pound suggested. "They put two half-pieces of cross-cut saws into the right-hand rut there— We aint touched a thing, Dep'ty! If that aint obstructing a public highway, I'd like to know what is!"

"Yes suh, Mr. Pound," Morrell nodded. "If we don't get somebody for murder in this matter, we'll have 'em on a misdemeanor, anyhow—plumb sure! Shu-u! That's Pietro Mistrionio, isn't it?"

"That's jes' who 'tis!" Dred declared. "He's a strangeh, too. He don't live up heah. He don't b'long heah. What kind of a reppytation do yo' reckon killin' him'll give we-uns out among his relations?"

"Pretty hard, I expect." Morrell shook his head. "It's that kind of killin' yo'

cain't explain. I don't know of anybody that'd wanted to kill him, do you?"

"No suh—not without it's some Revenue."

"Revenue—yo' don't think this is that kind of a killin'?"

"Well—somebody used a shotgun up theh in the bresh."

"Revenueurs always use rifles, far's I've ever heard." Morrell shook his head. "That kind of eliminates the Federals. Same time, Pietro Mistrionio—uh-h. That's his truck—"

"No, that aint his truck, but mine!" Dred declared. "Besides, my boy Tuck was driving hit, when they stopped to investigate what blowed up those two right-hand tires. They're most new, too—"

"Tuck Pound was with him? Where's Tuck?"

"Home—to bed. He was plugged twicet, laig an' a rib's all—30-30's, look like. Nice clean wounds," Tuck's father said.

"I don't think much of 30-30's." Sing-low Jack shook his head. "That boy run two mile—swum down the brook, too."

"The brook chill prob'ly freshed him up—"

"That's so, too," Dred nodded. "He actually didn't know he'd been hit till we seen the drips."

"But if't'd be'n good old-fashioned 45-90 lead, he wouldn't of—"

"I think prob'ly if everybody quit buying guns an' thinkin' killings, theh'd be a heap less meanness in the mountangs!" Morrell remarked casually.

"Huh!" Sing-low Jack tossed his head angrily. "Yo' take afteh yo' paw, don't yo'?"

"Why—how's that?" the Deputy Sheriff asked, surprised.

"Oh, preaching!" sneered Sing-low Jack, and Morrell colored as some of the Pounds had done at his own insinuation. It took a good man to get the wit-drop on Sing-low Jack when he was feeling right and his tongue was loose. Every one knew that, though some forgot it to their embarrassment.

Sheriff Corbling, Undersheriff Hiltons and three deputies raced swiftly out of the woods and galloped on sweating, heaving horses to the group of men at the disabled truck. Silently the Pounds spread back, giving the officials room in which to view the damage to the tires and the dead man lying beside the flat rear wheel. Corbling shook his head significantly, but nodded

just as though he had expected nothing else.

"This is sure a coroner's case," he observed. "You must have come quick, Morrell—found out anything?"

"I short-cut oveh from Blue-stone, soon as you telephoned me." The deputy colored under the praise. "They used a shotgun, an' likely two 30-30's. But I found two loadings—ten—of 45-short shoots. They waylaid from that point and put two pieces of an old cross-cut log-saw to blow the tires, stopping the truck. The explosions sounded like dynamite. Tuck Pound and this fellow jumped down, Tuck out of sight behind the truck. The shooting began right off, but they didn't see Tuck till he was oveh theh by the bridge. He skun down Little Fish, arriving home about fifteen minutes atfeh they heard the tires and fusillade. Oveh a mile, the way he circled. He was hit twice and didn't know it. Just scratches. Pietro fell right theh, an' prob'ly neveh kicked. His back's broke, along late in the shooting. Tuck said he stood up quite a while, surprised or stunned, he didn't say which—didn't even speak."

"That's too bad." Corbling shook his head. "He's a strangeh—this shooting must of been a mistake."

"Yes suh, I think so too, Sheriff!" Dred Pound declared. "He left lots of money in this country, around Beauty Mountang and so on. I'm kind o' worried what other business men'll say, him getting killed up unnecessarily. It looks bad."

"He was in the corn line, wa'n't he?" Hiltons inquired.

"Uh—I expect," Dred hesitated. "Anyhow, private business."

"I don't reckon yo' Pounds claim him, neither?" the Sheriff asked.

"No suh," Sing-low Jack shook his head.

"Jes' the truck," Dred interposed. "That's ourn."

"That means another burial at county expense, if Mistronio hasn't any int'rested relations," Corbling remarked tartly; "and ouh administration's trying its best to run the Gov'ment economically, too. Who can we engage to take the remains to town?"

"Why, Sher'f, I'd be glad to hire to do hit," Dred said. "But you see how hit is. I aint but one spare tire, an' two flat ones, cut plumb off the rim, a'most, by those plaguey saw-blade pieces. I don't know'f I can get them vulcanized, the way they is. That's goin' to cost right smart, too. Two

truck tires is right expensive, buying or fixing. I'm hesitatin' to run the truck home, as it is, with the shoes off, on account of it might stone-bruise the steel rims up heah where the limestone crops up."

"Well, all right—we'll find a wagon, then. That's the only automobile back yeah?"

"Yes suh. Course, I had to have hit, transportin'."

"I see—all right!"

OVER the telephone the coroner authorized the removal of the dead stranger, and late that day the Sheriff and his posse with their charge arrived in town. The next morning two lawyers arrived in town from outside and began to make inquiries into the possibility of suing Otter-house County for damages in failing to protect sufficiently a business man traversing the highways of said section of the Commonwealth. They consulted with local brothers at the bench and of the bar, heard the exact condition of things and decided to go right back down out of the mountains, until they could think it over. But they left the legal councils around Jesse Nichols' boarding-house fireplace with numerous pros and cons for discussion. There were both theoretical and practical angles to the outside lawyers' inquiry wonderfully interesting in the legal local aspect lights.

Over at the Courthouse in Prosecutor Hines' office the weighing of the facts in this latest of killings lasted a long time. The Sheriff, Undersheriff and Deputy Morrell were in consultation with the prosecutor. Morrell sat over in one corner, leaning back softly playing mountain music on a French harp, which Hines said helped him think clearly. It didn't annoy the Sheriff or Hiltons, so it was all right. Morrell didn't talk—couldn't while he played music, in fact.

"Well, we've all supposed and considered," Hines suddenly remarked. "What's your idea, Morrell? Did the Devoles waylay the truck, or was it just a happen-so killing?"

"All the cartridges were bright-new,"—Morrell smartly hit his French-harp keys on his palm,—“and tracks of the shooters all had hobnails in their soles. I don't think the Devole family had anything more to do with that killing than the Pounds did."

"What!" the listeners all ejaculated.

"No suh," Morrell affirmed, imperturb-

ably, adding: "I'll tell you why. When we searched the corpse theh was only nine dollahs an' eighty-three cents in his pockets."

"What's that got to do—"

"He was going up to do business—Dred Pound said so, with him. Tuck Pound was bringing him in the Pound truck. Pietro Mistronio neveh in the world went up theh to do business with a check-book. He carried cash. He's always be'n that kind of a commercial traveler. Course, it'd look like the Devoles done this meanness. But my personal idee is some bad actors have come up heah an' shot Mistronio for money."

"You say so?" Sheriff Corbling asked in a daze. "We got *robbers*, murderin' killers for *money* up yeah? I don't b'lieve hit!"

Morrell shrugged his shoulders with exasperating indifference to what his chief thought. Corbling started to argue, but Hines checked the talk with a lift of his hand.

"We'll have to examine that angle of the case," Hines said, seriously. "It stands to reason, now't we've a good contract road clear 'cross Devole and Pound country, both, thieving scoundrels might have used it to get in from the outside. I congratulate yo' on yo' perspicuity, Mr. Morrell."

"Take a Morrell an' yo' got a figurer!" Hiltons declared admiringly.

Morrell began to blow his French harp softly again. Pietro Mistronio was on business bent; he had to have cash; there was no cash on his person.

"I'm afraid we got some of those Down East gunmen scoundrels in this country!" Hines at last shook his head regretfully. "I tell you what it is, gentlemen, good roads, strangehs with money an' Prohibition aren't all an unmixed blessing. They sure do complicate legal affairs, especially, up heah in our country!"

"Yes, indeed!" Sheriff Corbling sighed. "I see where we've got to change and widen the legal practices in my department!"

CHAPTER VIII

THE Pietro Mistronio killing excited a deal of comment. That kind of affair hurt business. Then cooler heads prevailed and declared that it must have been an error difficult to avoid, because it was Dred Pound's truck, and naturally anyone would suppose the occupants would be

Pounds, never dreaming a stranger was on board. Of course, no one around there would kill strangers, unless they were suspicious, which Mistronio wasn't in the least—quite the contrary.

When it was whispered that the legal county authorities were considering the possibility that Pietro Mistronio had been killed on purpose for his money, it just didn't seem possible. What were city gunmen, mean, miserable, ornery wretches, going to do up in those mountains—if not to do criminal meanness? That sounded reasonable, but stunningly incredible.

People just swarmed down to Otter-house Court, all ready for business. Some things popular opinion wouldn't stand for, that's all there was about it. The authorities, seeing how people felt about it, refrained from fanning the flames of passion, refusing to affirm or deny they actually had any clues that waylaying robber criminals had appeared in the unsullied mountain domains. Course, the Pounds and Devoles, having matters of their own family concern in mind, kept away, but the neutrals were there good and plenty, showing that no two families had all the high spirits nor the capacities for action or indignation.

The leading citizens, political, professional and business, took turns in urging the cool but determined populace to remain calm and take their time before doing anything. A number of independent calculators, knowing from hearsay or personal observation or experience, went off by themselves to do some figuring. Curiously enough, they all came about to the same conclusions. Incautiously the Sheriff's department had let on that only nine dollars and eighty-three cents cash was found on the Mistronio person. He didn't have any empty money-belt on him, either. That was enough.

Anybody with any sense could deduce right off that Pietro Mistronio must have had two hundred and fifty-five dollars for just one standard barrel,—he never bought less than that,—for cheap new stuff. If he was going to Three-way Fork, it wasn't any flat-bottle deal on hand—no, indeedy! Besides, the truck was plain evidence that sixteen barrels were in the wind. And sixteen times two hundred fifty-five!

Everyone agreed that nobody around there ever had done such a meanness, killing for the purposes of money gain. Quite a few years ago, just for a joke, Jim Wright and two Templetons had sold a fellow two

barrels of honeydew for spot cash, and then waylaid the wagon down on Neuman's Ridge and took back the barrels which they sold to another fellow. But that was partly for the fun of it, and partly because the buyer had given Jim a counterfeit twenty-dollar gold-piece among the cash for another lot some time previous. Of course, that wasn't precisely highway robbery, and anyhow, there wasn't any killing in it, though people remarked that Jim Wright showed unusual restraint, for him, when he

ently sat in the defense of more than two hundred court cases in homicidal indictments. And neveh had but one man hanged. You know about *him*! But if this actually develops into a murder for money, I'll throw my sacred word of honor to the winds an' offer my nearly unrivaled experience in the effort to send to the gallows that miscreant or those scoundrels—if it breaks the record of fifty yeahs of legal practice, criminal an' civil. Yas suh, I give my word I shall!"



A fusillade of small arms roared. Mistrionio, clutching at the air, pitched on his face like a huddled-up rabbit.

found he had a twenty-dollar piece he couldn't get rid of! If the payment had been all in counterfeits, it would have been different; but Jim himself was reasonable, figuring perhaps the buyer had himself been stung by somebody he was dealing with.

"I never had in my professional practice or among my professional or personal friends anyone killed or killing anybody for money," Attorney Gillens reminisced.

"And that means right smart of cases," Judge Dudwitt added.

"I've kept track, for my own information, the past twenty-three years," Gillens elucidated, "and right here in Otter-house County—within or right at the borders, theh's been—uh-h—well, upwards of fifty got-killed fracasas among my own personal friends. Either it was forty-nine or fifty-one—I disremember. Not one for money! I wonder if any desperadoes are so foolish as to think they can bring their killings for robbery into this community?"

"Why, gentlemen, long ago I resolved I neveh would sit in on the prosecution of any man for a killing crime. I've consist-

THE Sheriff was riding with his personal posse. Deputy Sheriff James Morrell had gone away alone on his big sorrel horse, with black mane and tail, on special enterprise. As he had deduced the astounding surmise that it was murder for money that laid the stranger business-man Pietro Mistrionio dead on the Dugales furniture establishment mortuary stone, his going off that-a-way without telling what he was up to led to telephone inquiries here and there to find where he was passing by. He went circling around till they all lost track of him where he short-cut in the direction of Blue-stone Valley. Apparently he was going home. But he wasn't—leastwise not wholly for a visit at his folks.

Wherever he passed by, it was noticed that he usually was playing one or other of his seven French harps,—letters A to G,—so that even the birds in the trees chirruped enthusiastically. Everyone said he played "Dixie" louder than anyone ever heard it in those parts, that is, single-handed. Fiddler Zerine Ingalls, himself no slouch at long-distance music, declared with admiring envy that he had heard Morrell

a good fifteen minutes going over the mountain through Windy Gap, more than a mile from his own fiddling-practice cabin. He played in awful good time, too, so anybody could dance to his pieces without trouble.

BUT when Morrell entered Blue-stone Bottoms, he played lower and lower, till some late corn-huskers near Sycamore Church School didn't even hear him going by. Morrell circled into the hardwood behind the school where Ruby Devole came with a sugar-bag looking for chestnuts. When she saw him, she smiled mechanically, so that Morrell had kind of a chance to establish personal relations, which he did, having while waiting gathered enough chestnuts to make it unnecessary for Ruby to go to work at it. He didn't tell Ruby he had had word, by the merest of chances, from Attorney Gillens' golden-haired stenographer, that Ruby was gathering frosted chestnuts, and where about every day, especially Fridays.

Somewhat nervously, Ruby helped Morrell get started conversationally. She let on that she really didn't have any hard feelings toward him. He told her frankly how that nice Miss Cupper, Gillens' short-hander, and he, had happened to be talking, so he had come special to see Ruby. Ruby bristled a bit—talking to that stenographer, eh? That made it a lot easier for Ruby to be real nice to Morrell, friendlyling him.

"Course," Ruby declared in edged tones with characteristic feminine honesty, "the Devoles have *some* family feelings."

"Course they would!" he assured her of his understanding, adding: "They always were high-spirited, opinionated and reliable."

"Yes suh." She nodded. "Anotheh thing—you know this last killing?"

"Yes—that strange?"

"Pietro Mistronio—it was a mistake," she said. "That's what comes of unreliaables."

"Sho-course, nobody reflected anything on the Devoles in that," Morrell assured her. "Any one'd know killing him was a mistake, anywhere around Otter-house county, being what he was. But nobody seems to know just the particulars. Looks like he was killed and robbed for money."

"That's the worst of it!" Ruby shook her head angrily. "Course there just had to be a come-back, Danson being shot, an' then Freehold an' Mr. Arkey getting killed. Naturally, my family isn't one to

sit down an' suck their thumbs. At the same time—well, there was three strangers come along. They weren't revenuers. They just laid out. Every once in a while they met one or other of the boys. They kind o' lived on game, bought milk, paid liberal for meals an' so on. They'd read in the Tri-States *Anecdotes* about our Devole-Pound war, an' let on they were real interested in it. They 'lowed they liked—uh-h-h—some of our family right much, an' they wanted to do something to show their 'preciation. You know, it sounded reasonable—an' so they went oveh. They said they was going.

"And"—she dabbed her eyes—"the wrong man he got killed—an' theh's that awful stealing, to boot! Yo' know yo'se'f, James Morrell, theh never was a Devole in the world who wasn't honest! Why, they'd die before they'd steal! Now look't it! Ev'rybody's so suspicious! I was whippin' one of those unruly Tidley boys, an' when I stood him up ag'in, he whimpered an' said: 'Well, anyhow, no Tidley eveh killed anybody fo' money!' Course he was spiteful, an' 'pologized right off, but that shows how people feel."

"Well, not anybody that's grown up an' has any sense!" Morrell declared stoutly.

"Oh, you do understand!" she cried. "Oh, I knew you would!"

He gathered her into his arms as she shook with sobs and sorrow, her cup of anguish and weariness full.

"Theh—theh—" he kept saying, kissing the back of her head. "Nobody betteh suspicion the Devoles about robbery in my presence! They's honest and open-faced, that I know and'll swear to!"

"Oh-huh!" she gulped, suddenly drawing away from him.

"Why—what's the matter?" he gasped. "What've I done, Ruby?"

"Oh, I can't tell yo'!" she whispered, tense with feeling.

"Why, I aint done a thing!" he assured her. "Yo' *know* that!"

She shook her head, morosely, torn by doubts. Then she cried:

"Oh, Jim! I played on yo' feelings! I'm—I'm treacherous—terrible! I aint honest! I've been a traitor—I'm not open-faced—I abused yo' confidence. Oh, Jim, I'm not fitten! I'm not fitten!"

"Played on my feelings?" he chuckled. "Sho—I always wished I was a French harp for yo' to blow, Ruby! I envy the talkin'-machine yo' wind up to hear it play!

If I was a beagle-hound, I'd come to yo' whistle a mile! I neveh dreamed I'd be a musical instrument for yo' to play, Ruby!"

"Uh—I don't—" She choked, and then glared at him, suspiciously. "I mean it, Jim Morrell! This isn't any joking matter, suh!"

"Why—I meant it. If I was only a drum—"

"You!" she doubled up her fist, sitting up straight on his lap. "You!"

"Shu-u!" he breathed, wonderingly, and then urgently: "Why, look heah, Ruby! When yo' want religious songs, yo' put that kind in the talkin'-machine. And when yo' want mountang fiddling, yo' start that sort of a record, don't yo'? If I was a music-box, I could always say or sing whatever yo' wanted me to—that stands to reason!"

"Oh, yo're so lovely and faithful!" she sighed, and relaxed. "Oh, Jim! It's me that's no 'count! Hit's all a put-up job—even me heah sittin' on yo' lap!"

"That's one job I'd sho' like to have fo' life!" he declared with genuine enthusiasm.

"Quit making fun!" She wriggled. "I mean hit! Oh, I aint fitten to— Oh, Jim! That lawyer, Gillens, he fixed it all. He set that—that yeller-haired stenographer of his workin' yo' up to it. She smoothed hit out to yo', an' yo' come right into the trap, right yere! Oh, yo're so good an' smart an' unsuspicious! Gillens told how yo' figured out the Mistrionio meanness to be a money killin'. He wanted yo' bamboozled, but he knew—he reckoned if I told yo' the truth about hit, yo'd believe me. An' then yo'd be friendly in yo' testimony, when they get to joining issues in the court."

"That lawyer Gillens put up that job on me—on *Deputy-sheriff* Morrell—so's to influence my testimony pro or con?" Morrell demanded harshly.

The girl just nodded, glancing up with full eyes and then breaking into heavy weeping as she buried her face in her hands.

"Well, I like that!" Morrell said.

"Yes!" She nodded. "Gillens said yo' would!"

Morrell laughed shortly. "I did! I'd do anything in the world for yo'—"

"And I would—for you! Oh, I did want an excuse to see you, Jim Morrell! Oh, I didn't care what I did, if only I could get a chance to talk to you—and hear you! I've been so lonesome!"

"Uh-huh! Course—I don't know. . . . Oh, let's forget public an' family affairs, Ruby! I brought a snack in my saddlebags—"

"An' I brought one special into my school case," she sighed. "Anyhow, we can be friendly, outside of law-business. Here's a big chicken; do you like white meat or the legs?"

"Both," he assured her, "as long as you feed 'em to me!"

"You do say such lovely things!" she sighed. "I just knowed you would, if you eveh loosened up!"

"Eveh since the first time I saw you, I've been waiting the chance to say what I could think up right out of my heart!" He took her hands, full of chicken-meat, in both of his.

And so thieving scoundrels and lawyers, family raids and mountain troubles might roar around them. The deputy could forget his duty and the school-teacher could forget her responsibility at least for the time being. So they did. Whatever or wherever might arise or scheme to thwart them, personally they could find and keep faith, sufficient for the moment.

"Oh, Jim!" Ruby laughed in her tears. "Oh, I love yo', yo're so friendly and forgiving! I neveh dreamed a mountang man could be like that!"

CHAPTER IX

THE Devoles felt the censure of public opinion. They had the most population and most property, breaking about even on respectability and honor—until it was noised around that they had stood in on a killing robbery with three hired strangers raiding the Pounds. Naturally engaging an army to help in war was sometimes necessary, but when, meanness having been done by accident on a business man and stranger, robbing the corpse was just too much. Accidents could be regretted and condoned, but leveling a family war down from high honor to killing for money—that would scandalize any community in the world having any pride and high ideals. Now, wouldn't it?

The Pounds sighed when mentioning the matter. What credit could they get, fighting that kind of people? To everybody they admitted that eagles must feel the way the Pounds did if the noble birds warred with buzzards. Why, going at it with such

enemies wouldn't improve the social position of anyone—how could it? It would even hurt a clean reputation, probably. And just imagine sitting down to sign articles of peace after the war was settled, and it was time to come down off the high horses—how would a man feel, putting his name on the same papers with that kind?

THE Devoles keenly felt their disgrace too. When they rode into Otter-house Court, trading,—which they did very sparingly,—they looked no one in the eye, went about their business quickly, watchful, white-faced and ashamed. They arrived on odd days, Wednesdays or Fridays when only those who happened to be shy of baking-powder or table salt or shell-shoots for game guns hurried in and out, and few would be met on silent, nearly deserted streets. Ordinarily one of the most neighborly families, now a Devole hated to meet anyone.

Course, dastards and ornery strangers had taken advantage of wide-open mountain good intentions and innocence. Three scoundrels had played it low-down an' hog-mannered on Danson Devole, one of the most trustful men in the world. Hiring men, course he had expected them to do the job right!

Like the brave man he was, he accepted the blame, telling his relations over and over again how it had happened.

"When I was out that day after the Thanksgiving turkey," he said, "I met three men on top the Misty Main Ridge. They had good 30-30's and a shotgun. We spoke and fell to talking. They let on they were good shots, so we put up a mark, sixty steps; an' they were good—yes suh! One held a silver dollar in his thumb and finger at fifty steps, and the tall feller plugged it, plumb center in the Liberty head.

"They asked me about the Sheriff an' his deputies. I told them our experiences with them. They understood there was war in the county, so I admitted I was Danson Devole. They brightened right up. They asked me if I wouldn't like a reliable company, good for scouting, and I jumped at the chance. Then I told them what I wanted. We'd fallen behind, some, shooting Pounds, losing Freehold and Arkey, the way we had, and not being able to claim that fellow cross-fired by Sing-low Jack's gun afeh Deck wounded him. Besides, he was just a logger, paid ten dollars for his company. So the strangers agreed to way-

lay the Pounds below Dred's place on the creek bottoms, which I showed them about on a map in the dirt. I paid them half down in advance, and gave them an order for ammunition, 30-30's and buckshot gun shoots.

"They not on'y didn't more'n just scratch Tuck Pound, but they killed Mr. Mistronio. Yo' could have knocked me down with a quill-feather. I neveh dreamed he'd be in the Pound truck! It neveh entered my head! I neveh saw him he wasn't riding in his own automobile. An' as for pocketpicking Pietro Mistronio's money an' takin' off his money belt—well, course, anybody knows any Devole'd had more self-respect than that, yes indeedy! Same time, feeling the way they do, the Pounds wont admit it. Course, I don't expect Sing-low Jack's saying anything, making hints or like that. I 'low he's too honorable to backbite that-a-way. Same time, not one of them has square-toed right out exonerated the Devoles of intentionally being so low-down as the looks is, account of us being fooled by those three fellers. I thought I was a judge of men, but those three sure blinded me, smiling, talking glib, making out they was all right.

"Well, course, they're those Down Easters, killing for money!" Deck shook his head.

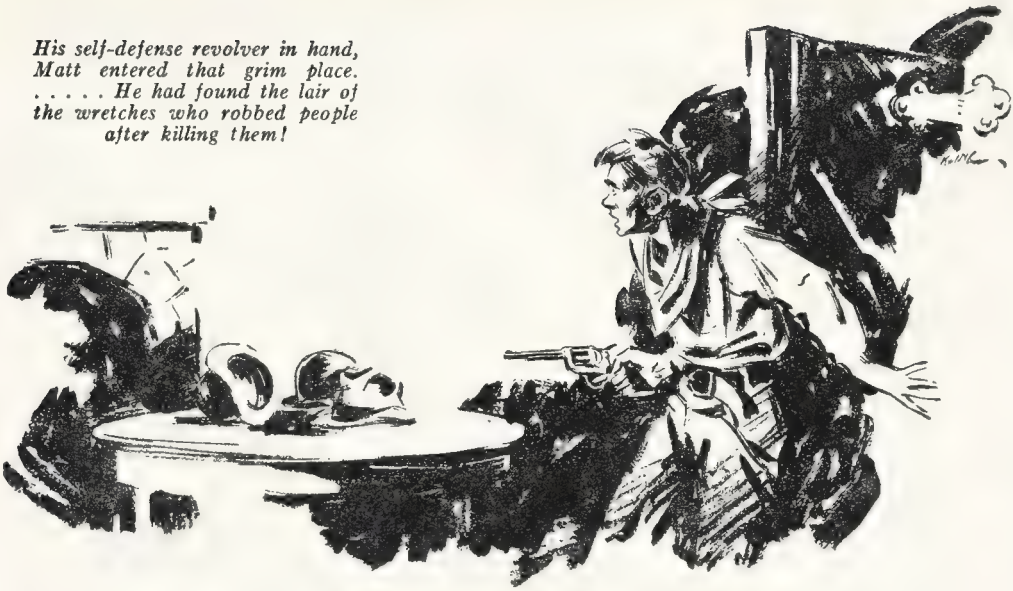
"They didn't give me that idea at all!" Danson declared. "Why, one as much as said they was scouting out, account of a fiery chair crime. They don't hang 'em back where they come from. Course, robbery aint a crime for executing. Killing is, so what could I think?"

"Probably they killed somebody, robbing him, like they tell about in those bank hold-ups," Deck suggested.

"Yo' wouldn't naturally think of that. We wouldn't, down in the mountang country!" Danson protested. "Yo' neveh connect a killing with being a dirty thief too! Why, yo' take a hog-thief or a chicken-thief, an' they're too ornery to kill anybody! Look't Ped Wishon, that Judge Dudwitt defended an' he was convicted! Ped Wishon neveh had the gumption to kill anybody. If I'd been accused of stealin' hogs—lawse! Why, I'd grabbed a gun an' shot the witness right out the chair, if I could of! Ped jes' sat theh takin' hit. Why, he didn't even color up! Be'n me, I'd dashed daid!"

"Those Wishons neveh had much pride, anyhow," Deck observed.

*His self-defense revolver in hand,
Matt entered that grim place.
... He had found the lair of
the wretches who robbed people
after killing them!*



"Theh's some likely ones, though. Old Hi—"

"He was spirited afteh his mother. She's a Pound—"

"That's so. She was kind of a happen-so in the family, for a fact. Same time, those three killers for money—shu-u! Reckon they've cleared out."

"Looks like! They neveh did come to claim the otheh half, did they, Danson?"

"Makes me sick—they did, an' got hit!" Danson sighed. "Soon's I knew for certain there'd been a killin' oveh theh on Little Fish, I went up an' met them, the way I'd agreed, an' paid off. It neveh entered my head prob'ly Mr. Mistronio'd been robbed. Wounding Tuck Pound showed they'd tried to keep their agreement, an' if Mistronio'd been a Pound, course he'd been killed. It was Dred Pound's truck, too. The moral effect on the Pounds, making them nervous, was accomplished. So, course, I paid—fifty dollars apiece. I paid three hundred dollars buying trouble for the Pounds, an' now yo' might say the Devole reputation's spotted up."

"Betteh nobody make any insinuations around us!" Deck declared angrily.

"What yo' goin' to do to some lady if she throws hit in yo' face?" Danson asked.

"That's so," Deck sighed. "Ladies neveh was no hand to keep their mouths shet—"

"I done one thing," Danson added: "I had from Attorney Gillens he was back-firing on our reputation. I told 'im to go the limit. He's going to work on the au-

thorities. He thinks he can reach somebody in the Gov'ment—course not Jerry Hines. All we need, he says, is responsible an' neutral witnesses, say dep'ty-sheriffs, to testify to our good characters and intentions. That way, we can git our reputations a matter of court record. That makes it permanent. I tell yo', that man Gillens is awful intelligent! He aint just a lawyer; he's a molder of public opinion, as well as getter of court decisions."

"He sho' got one fo' po'r Purview!"

"Course, that was misfortunate. I tell yo', that broke Gillens up more'n it did us, yo' might say. His professional record an' honor were at stake. He neveh will get oveh it, either. Jerry Hines outsmarted him, pickin' the jury, first whack. Gillens neveh dreamed the prosecution'd get them the way it was done. He figured he knowed every man on that jury, Gillens did—but he miscalculated on theh sense of honor, an' Jerry appealed to theh public spirit, county, state an' nation. They couldn't git around the killin' evidence—I don't know now why Purview cut Elra's throat afteh he was daid! That was his mistake! Hines made it show malice, when it was jes' excitement. Gillens is kind of dubious about Deck's chasing Sing-low Jack as long as he did, afteh that shootin' in the Gap. Hit'll come close to deliberate intent to do bodily harm, instead of impulsive reaction."

"Seems to me family warring for honor's gittin' pretty dog-gone complicated!" Deck exclaimed. "Theh was a time—"

"Well, anyhow, we betteh lie low awhile," Danson said. "We'll see what the Poundses an' the Gov'ment does next."

"I know one thing," Dred remarked; "they aint anybody sparing any pains trying to locate those three robbing killers."

"I want to know, myse'f, right away, when trace is found of 'em!" Danson declared darkly. "If yo' find a fresh track, tell me—all of you! The minute I find out, the Devole family'll show hits good intentions!"

Thus admonished, the consultants and planners issued forth up runs and over the ridges. They ransacked the Mountains of the Mists for signs or traces of the three scoundrels.

Matt Devole, one of Danson's boys, went over to see Aunt Ruby at the Widow Clifton's on Turkey Branch. Ruby sent word back to her brother that she had had a long talk with Deputy Sheriff Morrell, and that he seemed real friendly but honest. Apparently the Sheriff's department was taking its tone of neutrality and square dealing from Prosecutor Jeremiah Hines, though of course a son of Slow-poke Morrell would naturally have the highest probability, come what may. All the Devoles had to do, in those circumstances, was to carry themselves honorably and according to law, and they could depend on having everything their own way in court.

On his way home with this letter, Matt kept pretty high up the mountains off the roads and trails. He circled around the houses and clearings, though taking a look into empty cabins along the way. The Brakes, up in the highest Misty Ridge knobs, attracted the youth. He came right through them, and even went to the grown-up Stone Mansion, which it took a brave one to look at, on account of the mystery of its murders, fifty years before.

HARDLY anyone ever went to that slate-roofed, mossy-sided, glassless-windowed home of haunts. It was two stories high, with bld hewn timbers fairly petrifying, and was occupied by bats and owls, ghosts and traditions; nevertheless Matt Devole just had to go squint through the tall, thick second-growth of the long-abandoned clearing. For one thing, the old orchard apples there were the sweetest Cider-frosts anywhere. As he filled his pockets, he smelled something burning. The south-end fireplace chimney was smoking blue! And the big living-room downstairs was glowing

from a large bed of red coals in the fireplace.

The youth shivered. It was after midnight. The curse of that Stone Mansion might fall on a mere spectator. Nevertheless he could see on the table strange wares, silvery kettles and the equipment of sports. Watchful and cautious, he investigated. No one else was there. His self-defense revolver in hand, he entered that grim place. His suspicions were verified. He recognized two derby hats and a narrow-brimmed felt one. He had found the lair of the wretches who robbed people after killing them!

NEEDING to know more, scrupulously refraining from taking or even touching a single treasure of nesting aluminum or wonderful blankets, he retreated, leaving no least sign of his intrusion. Eating apples and pondering, stepping to hummed music, he short-cut and scurried along the high-place ridge-back trails, and toward sunset raced swiftly down through a saddle-back of culled-timber growth into his father's hillside clearing, planted to corn and so steep if one slipped he would roll to the bottom.

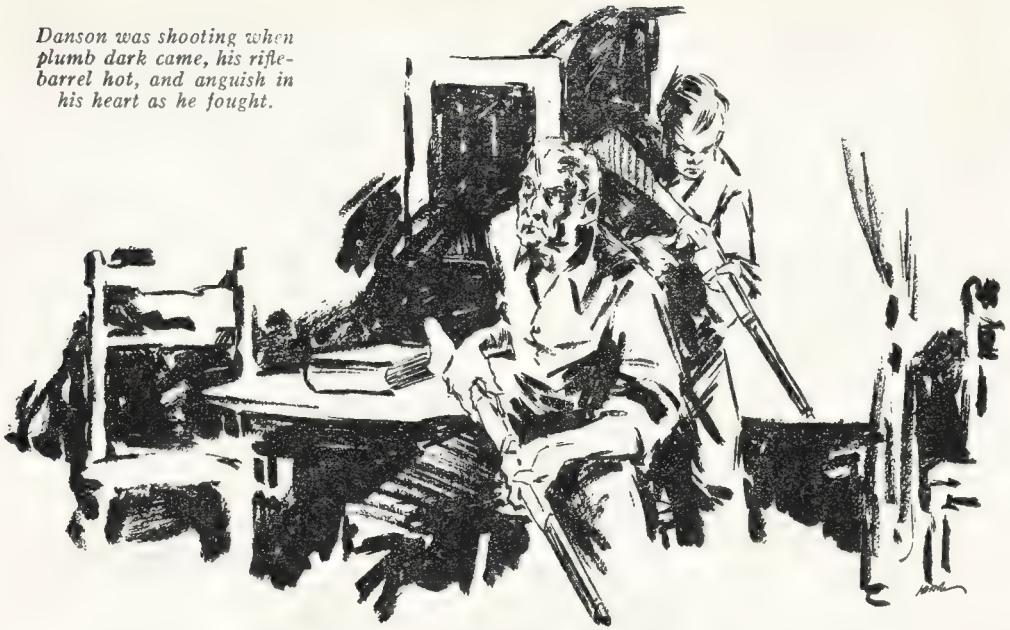
The whole family were pulling corn from the stalks, and Matt slid to a stand where his father stood among the few stalks which still had their single ear, hanging down, ready to gather. Handing Danson the letter from Ruby, the youth told what he had found—the lair of the three dead man robbers. He described his examination, confirmation of his suspicion, and his observation of the scoundrels' sporting outfit. Danson nodded with grim satisfaction.

"It took right smart nerve to go into that old Stone House!" the father remarked, glad he had a son to do a thing so brave.

Forgetting just where he was, Danson stepped backward. On the instant, he landed ten feet below and went tumbling, rolling, grabbing at cornstalks, till he came to the nearly dry run-branch bed a hundred yards below, downhill, landing on his feet. He was in the late day shadow. He looked where he had come, decided it was no use to climb back up, and shouted: "Come on in—might's well lay off today. Tomorrow we'll finish!"

On the instant, from an overhanging bank of laurels at the top of the cornfield, showering buckshot and plunging bullets swept into the dangling ribbon-leaves and bent them in lines the whole distance down,

Danson was shooting when plumb dark came, his rifle-barrel hot, and anguish in his heart as he fought.



to splash lead around where Danson Devole stood on the convoluted bedrock limestone. The boy Matt just collapsed to double over from sitting on his heels, pitching headlong down the steep, baked-clay slope, undulating limply on the way toward where his father stood gaping with open mouth for a moment of astonishment.

THEN Danson leaped as he turned to head for the house. Bullets splashed around him, but he merely heard them click. Inside, he caught a rifle and boxes of shells and knelt where he could see where the bushwhackers were still firing down through the thin but rather effective screen of cornstalks. The next instant a 45-90 boomed, and there was a rumbling difference in the echoes as ten fervent slugs crashed up that terrific height. As he let them go, Danson mourned to think none of the corn-gatherers had carried weapons to their work. They just hadn't dreamed war would be brought to their own home coves and hollows!

A drove of hogs coming in from feeding on oak and chestnut mast in the woods began to squeal as they charged through the briers and laurels up where the killers were lying. Danson saw something, two or three times, and the accuracy of his fire was proved by a long wound where his heavy bullet had creased an old boar. And then Danson saw a sure-enough man for an instant away up at the crest of the thin woods—and drove a whole magazineful

after the scoundrel, hopefully. He was shooting when plumb dark came, his rifle-barrel so hot it steamed the water where he plunged it into the rain barrel to keep the temper in it.

Anguish was in his heart as he fought the battle. He had seen his boy Matt collapse and start sliding down. He could see up in the corn a flutter of blue as a twilight breeze stirred a woman's dress—he didn't know whose. He had seen other boys and girls scuttling away, stooping low—not uttering a sound. One youth, Lest' Devole, had come to the house, fourteen years old and true-blooded, for he seized a rifle and poured long bullets up into those covering woods, making them unsafe for murderers.

Titan Devole, only twelve years of age, raced away at the first alarm, without any word being said to him, and, not knowing whether or not he would meet an army of raiders, scurried to call his uncles, cousins and other relations to arms.

It was hardly dark when Lester ceased firing, and with a word of warning to his father about where he should shoot, hurried up the cornfield and found his sister Lucy, who had fallen as she turned to flee. She wore that blue dress which had stirred in the breeze. He carried her down in his arms, a pitiful huddle who had died where she fell. Mrs. Devole, the mother, had been creased across the back just under the shoulders, and Danson found where three bullets had gone through the slack of his shirt and pants.

"Anybody aint safe anywhere any more!" Danson sighed wearily, and choking with wrath, he growled: "Somebody's got to pay for this!"

Well after dark had fallen, Devole reinforcements began to arrive. At Titan's alarm, they had made sure there were no raiders around their own places. Then they came in the starlight to rescue their leader Danson from the scoundrels who had assailed him.

THEY found their leader with his dead, bitter, stunned and vowing vengeance. One by one they joined him in declaration of the most implacable of desires for immediate settlement, as soon as the funerals were over, of this murdering which did not stop at fair women or boys. Danson, sitting at a table in his house, with pickets out and the sobs of the women in his ears, began to write:

Sheriff Corbling:

I have to tell you my place was Raded today by scoundrels who murdered my son Matthew an shot down in Cold blood my dear daughter Lucy Devole, a fair budding flower of fifteen years who was mindin her own business shuckin' corn an never in God's world's harmed any soul. Is that Law? Is that right, I ask you? When has any Devole lady ever deserved this foul fate from any budy. If thar is any justice in this Country I demand it show Its head now! I hav said enough. I hereby declare that hence forth Action shall show my feelings.

Sined, DANSON DEVOLE.

The same young son who had shot the rifle side by side with his father, that hour of passing day, now took the letter, and riding furiously down the roads, over the gaps and into the main street of Otterhouse Court, roused the Sheriff from his bed and delivered the letter by the first streak of dawn.

Corbling read deliberately, and put a few questions to the boy, Lester Devole, who described the raid and what he had seen of it.

"Breakfast'll be ready pretty soon," Corbling told the messenger. "I'll roust out my deputies. I tell you, my boy, I don't blame yo' daddy for bein' provoked—I'd be myse'f! I'll bet Prosecutor Hines'll rear when he hears about this. I don't think much of hanging, but if I could have those woman-killers on a gallows drop, I'd pull the trigger 'thout a compunction in the world, yes, indeedy!"

"My lan'!" Lest' told his folks after-

wards, "Sheriff Corbling shu' looked mad an' noble, sayin' hit, too!"

CHAPTER X

EVERYONE agreed that the Pounds and Devoles had their dander up, the way they were going at it. First one, then the other, indicated the family purpose of taking this family war with the utmost seriousness, not caring what they did so long as somebody was being killed on one side or the other. Despite the Devole numerical superiority, they were apparently getting the worst of it, as yet not evening up the score of man for man. It looked particularly like business when the raiders come right to Danson Devole's house, catching him unarmed in his own cornfield. It was a good bet he would have guns on his person for self-defense after this. Some lessons a man learns quick, and don't forget them soon, either.

The answer to giving Tuck Pound a flesh wound had been delivered with hot lead. The Pounds didn't say so, in that many words, but the way they looked indicated their grim satisfaction. Course, no one had intended to kill Lucy Devole. She was a nice girl, with nothing in the world against her except she was a Devole. If anyone said anything about a lady being killed, accidentally, on the other hand nobody would ever suspect Pietro Mistronio of being mixed up in any feud war, and especially robbing him wasn't likely to be called an accident, no indeedy! Killings might happen by accident, but when money is stolen, *that's* meant. No, the Devoles couldn't say a word!

Sheriff Corbling and his posse rode to the scene of the shooting. He was accompanied by the Coroner and Prosecuting Attorney Hines. They found the brush cut to pieces where Danson Devole had stood at the breech of his rifle, assisted by Lest' Devole at the breech of another man-size rifle, pouring lead through the assassins' lair. They found where three bushwhackers had eaten lunch, judging by chicken-bones, jam-tumblers and crumbs of pones and bread. The snacks had been wrapped up in newspapers, Tri-State *Anecdotes*, to wit, and the authorities had to laugh for on three of the pieces were the address-tabs, yellow stickers.

Examination of the laurel bushes, hanging like a wave out of a thicket of trees at

the top of the cornfield, revealed the fact that three men had sat there for a long time, eating snacks and passing the time of day waiting, apparently, till toward night, when they could shoot the corn-ear harvesters and be able to escape in the darkness after sunset and passing late candle-light.

The shooters had used 30-30 rifles and a 12-gauge repeating shotgun. The marks of the ejector were plainly to be seen on the brass shell-heads. They found twenty shotgun shells and thirty-eight 30-30 shells.

Sheriff Corbling declared reservedly that to his mind every hurtling bit of lead and every empty shell, every rifle-projectile was in itself an exhibit of felonious intent.

Prosecutor Hines even admitted that these things looked like pretty suspicious circumstances even taken by themselves, which was a lot for that close-mouthed official to say in private, let alone for publication, being a regular court remark when getting down to business. The newspaper address-tabs read:

Pound, Dred, 19-26
Singing Creek P. O.

Pound, John, 32-26
Ruddy Run P. O.

Pound, Dred, 19-26
Singing Creek P. O.

Course, that made it look twice as strong against Dred as against Sing-low Jack, on the face of it. Somebody'd have to do some mighty tall talking, anyhow. At the same time, seeing as Dred Pound kept a store and could naturally plead he used newspapers to wrap up purchases, it left Sing-low Jack Pound probably in the tighter place, other things being about equal between him and Dred. And then again, the same Tri-States *Anecdotes* might have been carried home by customers, and used for wrapping again. Not having any indictments to talk on, the lawyers around Jesse Nichols' boarding-house fireplace naturally took up *de-factos*, *prima facies* and other theoretical *particeps criminis* fine points.

NO one was really expecting Prosecutor Hines to fly off the handle, but apparently he 'lowed the times were ripe for a showdown, kerslam. He went into the December term of court, locked himself up with the Grand Jury, and came out with a whopping back-slapping Christmas gift of

three right-out-in-the-open indictments for murder, without any seasonal feelings apparent. To wit:

Dred Pound
John Pound, alias Sing-low Jack
John Doe.

That *alias* was a snarling bite. Everybody knew *Sing-low Jack* wasn't the disguise of a criminal, but just a good-natured appellation of his friends and family, as well as the general public. But it was putting it right up to the Pounds to fish or cut bait, defend or get out.

Also, since none of the Devole family were indicted, every lawyer just had to figure out the strategies underlying the one-sided attack. Immediately, Sheriff Corbling with four men rode in a posse to catch the accused, but the two Pounds named took to the mountains, while everybody sat on the anxious seat wondering who the Sheriff would figure to hit with the John Doe warrant. Sing-low Jack and Dred were reported to be scouting back on the Beauty Mountain range.

The Devoles, none of them being indicted or sleeping out, could ride into town as free as the air, which they now did on Saturdays and Mondays, so what had been talked right out on those days in the Court-house Square became whisperings, if anything. It wasn't healthy to be too glib about robbing the dead. Gossip and rumor became but echoes out of the past. In the first place, no Devole had in person attended the killing. On the night in question reliable neutral witnesses had been with or knew about and could swear to the exact place, alibi-ing every last Devole able to or liable to shoot a gun, pistol, rifle or other deadly weapon. Danson Devole had been absolutely forehanded that-away, having one of the air-tightest, glass-clear, indestructible alibis Attorney Gillens himself had ever studied from an angle of curiosity or business.

The opprobrium of murder for robbery rested wholly upon their own three selves for their own venal acts. Not even in the camps of their bad friends could the Devoles, much less Danson Devole—the soul of honor—be suspected of hiring anybody to rob as well as to kill anybody.

Indictments charging killing with intent to rob were drawn for presentment to the same grand jury by Prosecutor Hines, his idea being to bring the three murderers of Pietro Mistronio to book at the same time

he went after the Pounds for killing Lucy Devole, *et al.* Judge Dudwitt protested vehemently in the interests of the Pound good name against having Lucy Devole named as the victim.

"She's an accident!" Dudwitt declared.

"A homicide during a felonious proceeding is still a homicide?" Hines asked suavely. The Judge blinked, and went back to his library to look for fine points. At the same time a look of triumph on his face caused Hines more carefully to consider his project to indict John Doe, Richard Roe and James Coe, lacking definite information as to the real names of the Little Fish Run bushwhackers. It was lucky he did. The words "with intent to rob" would have been a well-nigh fatal error of legal strategy in the circumstances. The money inferred to have been taken from Pietro Mistrionio's person must have been an aftermath, the chance luck rather than the incentive of crime. Accordingly the project for indictment went over for the moment.

In order to obtain action, Judge Dudwitt deposited fifteen hundred dollars in the Otter-house Bank to be given as a reward of five hundred dollars each for the apprehension and delivery into custody, and conviction, of the three killers of Pietro Mistrionio. Dudwitt did not say who was offering the reward. Ruben Gillens hung up another reward, two thousand dollars, for the capture and conviction of the killers of Lucy Devole and Matt Devole. This was frankly Devole money.

SHERIFF CORBLING called his deputies and undersheriff into confidential meeting and made the simple statement:

"I want those scoundrels brought in—and for the Sheriff of Otter-house County, I want to say that who gets those men, and supplies the needed evidence as to the killings, gets the rewards. Furthermore, on behalf of the State I add two hundred and fifty dollars reward for each and every capture and conviction obtained."

Notices were accordingly drawn up, printed and distributed as specified. The handbills were hung in the offices of all the sheriffs for three hundred miles around. Also, as information was received, or rumors circulated, cities and county courts down the Mississippi, along the Mexican border, and in certain distant regions, received extra notices by mail. The Pounds under indictment were believed to have fled from the country.

ABOUT every so often Morrell went over to Blue-stone Valley. He let on he wanted to see his pap. Course, he did visit his home folks. Same time, as long as school kept, he didn't fail to drop in on Ruby Devole too, and when anyone spoke to him about that, he said it was officially. Ruby declared, too, that she was double-motivated, having Attorney Gillens advising her conduct and conversation.

Then when she went home for the holidays, Morrell rode clear over the mountains and visited her at her brother's house. Danson and the rest of his family were pretty blue and glum, on account of the recent bereavement, but they spoke civilly enough, making no objections to Morrell's presence by their fireplace. Morrell tried his best to be friendly, personally, even if his job as deputy-sheriff made him liable at any time to be official and obnoxious. Danson was short-tempered. He apologized for it, though.

"I'm sorry, Morrell, but I can't he'p being short," Devole declared. "Anybody would be, seein' his boy sliding down the mountain, the way I did mine—shot dead. Besides having his daughter shot daid too! Matt'd just found those three thieving killers oveh in the Brakes at the Stone Mansion an' I was goin' to tell yo' right away—then the shooting began!"

"Course, it was right hard!" Morrell admitted. "If the law don't protect a man or a family in his own corn-patch, he's naturally going to depend on himse'f, afterwards."

"An' he aint going to go out of his way to favor no legals, either," Danson declared, vehemently.

"Course not!"

Morrell courted around the rest of that evening, and come night he set out with Ruby. But come it was late, he surprised her.

"Well, Ruby, I'd better be goin'," he told her.

"But theh's a bed ready fo' yo', Jim," she whispered. "Shucks—not tonight! Somebody might mistake yo'—"

"I know—same time, I wont follow no roads, go past no trail-side bresh," he promised her, though obdurately he persisted in his departure.

"But why?" she demanded.

"Why—uh,"—he smiled cheerily,—“I got a new tune to play, one I made up myself."

Ruby's eyes flashed.

"If you're leavin' me to make up French harp music—" she began.

Morrell took forty minutes to say his good-by, leaving Ruby pacified, kissed and placated back to a trustful smile.

But Deputy Sheriff Morrell had gathered information of prime importance.

Thinking as he rode, he figured a scheme. He headed straight for the Widow Clifton's, she being about his size. He hailed her cabin in the small morning hours, and she abused him cheerfully; but when he stated his case, she invited him to come—presently—across the foot-log over Turkey Branch. And then, giggling, and mighty pleased to help him out, she loaned him what he needed for his plan. She told him he just must write a poem and set it to music, for it would make a wonderful one, the story of his enterprise. Dawn had not arrived when, with a bundle, he headed on his way again, the widow promising never to betray him if he failed.

Then he circled over to Blue-stone Ridge, where he found that the fiddler 'Zerne Ingalls was—luckily—not at home, though the brass-buttoned dance orchestra uniform was. He borrowed the short velvet jacket, a pair of velvet knickerbockers and long stockings to match. With these he had a practical pair of short leather boots. He further draped himself with one of the widow's shortish skirts, designed from motion-picture styles as revealed every week at the county-court shows, and so he was dressed fit to kill.

MORRELL was pretty well satisfied with himself, arrayed partly in widow's weeds and partly in a fiddler's musical suit. He headed along the ridge back; and the next afternoon, having stopped to sleep in a limestone cave, he was at the edge of the Brakes on Misty Mountain. There an old wagon-road ascended into the rough of the ridges.

Without any conscience at all in the matter, Morrell was taking advantage of Danson Devole's slip of the tongue. Probably Danson didn't suspect for an instant what he had misspoken, not having any intention of helping the law, much less the Sheriff department, in the matter of the three scoundrels who had changed a mission of feud reprisal right square into murder for money. But Danson had told that Matt had seen the camp of three up here in the Brakes. Morrell could deduce a lot from that fact.

The old Stone Mansion in the grown-up clearing would be just the kind of a place bad-acting strangers would likely pick for a hiding-place if they didn't know its history. And so when they came in with some game they had killed—two wild turkeys, one a gobbler, and a 'coon—they found they had a good joke for a visitor.

Half man and half woman in his garments, this daffy was sure a player of lively music. He could make a harmonica talk. He had a pocket full of French harps, and he could play two tunes at once, blowing one and tonguing the other. The three had traveled far, met many curious people, and never had they come upon anyone like this fellow, with his lean and weathered face, a tolerably short skirt hanging from his waist and leather boots on his feet. He wore a man's coat and a lady's blouse, and a widow's bonnet tied under his chin.

"I've had my hair cut with a boyish bob!" he assured his hosts, with a smirk. "Don't yo' think it's very becoming?"

"I bet you never did look fascinater!" one assured the visitor.

"Do you cook, fair one?" another inquired.

"Cook?" the visitor bristled. "Would you insult a New Woman, sir?"

"Not if he wants to stay healthy with us," another declared for the disconcerted host.

Nevertheless the visitor turned to and helped dress the turkeys, and having stuffed them with chestnuts, spicing, seasoning and other dressing, hung them on trammels to roast in the heat of the fire-place flames and coals, putting a pan under the birds to catch the drips for savory gravy. Presently the three were sitting back smiling to themselves as their guest prepared things for a fine meal.

THEY learned that the visitor was a widow. Long ago a recreant and despicable man had run away, leaving a grass widow never to mourn for him—no indeedy! Claiming the name of Lucinda DeMay, the very good cook presently served such a meal as the three had not eaten in many a day. Having eaten, they were obliged, by the indignation of the cook, to wash the dishes and clear away the mess. Laughing, they did as ordered. And to reward them, as night fell and only the flames illuminated the big living-room, the widow began to play pieces, dances

from slow and stately minuets and waltzes through polkas, schottisches, two-steps and marches into jigs, clogs, hornpipes.

"He can play!" one remarked, earnestly.

"Sir!" the musician demanded. "You sav *he*?"

They begged pardon; and presently, mollified, the musician went on while the three relaxed, listening, quieting and settling into positions of greater ease and comfort. The player tuned and mused with softer and gentler strains. One by one the outlaws nodded; soon one was asleep, then another, and finally all three were settled into pleasant dreams of complete repose. The musician was sitting with one of the men on his left and two on his right. Stealthily, with one hand, he collected the pistols they had laid aside on the floor. Then, still playing, he snapped handcuffs onto two wrists, fastening two of the men together. The third he clipped with another pair.

QUICKLY and on the instant all three leaped with yells from horrible dreams of captivity into the wakefulness of grim realization.

Before them stood a grotesque figure, clad now partly in skirts and partly in men's clothes, covering them with a menacing and deadly revolver.

"I'm Deputy Sheriff Morrell of Otter-house County," he announced. "I have John Doe warrants for your arrest, charging you with murder and robbery."

"You bloody-blimped fool!" two cursed the third, a dark, swarthy man. "You saw this bull at the dance!"

That was the man who had come with the Devoles, sure enough! Morrell examined the guns he had captured. One was a .45 special, with exactly the same bullets as those two which killed Doug' Pound at the Picnic House. The dark man looked surprised. He sighed with regret and self-accusation when Deputy Morrell removed the rest of his disguises.

"He played us—me for a sucker," the man accused by his pals admitted, adding resentfully: "And we thought these rubes was all jays!"

They all looked morose and tired. Morrell searched them for evidence or whatever they had. They all had money-belts and a lot of treasury certificates in medium and small denominations. Through most of these, in one corner were small, neatly bored round holes, of about 30-caliber.

Stains were further significant. A great light entered the eyes, and satisfaction spread across the countenance of the deputy-sheriff.

"Anything you say'll be used against you," he remarked sternly. "You are entitled to a lawyer, too. I reckon I've a good line on you, now. This money,"—and he beamed with growing intelligence,— "I wonder how come you didn't burn this letter? Thought we wouldn't get yo', eh? You thought you was smart, pretending you was mixing up into a family war which wasn't any of your business, Giuseppi Galponeo, Luigi Lisparado, and Farris Roswick. What you done was come up here to kill Pietro Mistronio, hi-jacking him, trying to beguile us officials and native citizens into believing permanently yo' was just doing family meanness, expecting to be exonerated by popular sentiment on account of home-county friends—huh!"

"You fool, Roswick, not burnin' that letter!" Galponeo, the dark one, snarled at a fair younger man.

"I reckon we've a prosecuting attorney who'll know how to use this letter from your spying lookout," Morrell taunted them with boyish pleasure; but recollecting himself, he said gently: "Well, you can got to sleep, boys; I'll keep the fire going and so on. We'll go down to the County Court in the morning."

The three rolled their eyes with helpless resignation. . . . And in the morning, after a cold snack, they headed down the old grown-up roadway into the clearings along the creek.

MORRELL recovered his saddle and bridle, found his horse had stopped to browse and called it with a whistle. Then he rode, herding his prisoners with four of their wrists attached to one another; and out at White Corn Gristmill, the nearest telephone, he notified his chief, Sheriff Corbling, of the capture of the badly wanted strangers.

Toward mid-evening a cavalcade rode into Otter-house Court, three prisoners surrounded by nine deputies and citizens. Arraigned before the county judge, they demanded a lawyer, and Attorney Gillens was assigned to look after their interests. He regarded his duty with ill-concealed distress, for it was clear that the prosecution was determined to hang three more of his clients at the earliest possible date.

"We'll accept immediate trial," Gillens

said, after due consultation with the accused. Hines regarded him with doubt, and not with an air of triumph. In his bearing was respect for the old boy.

A week later, with the court surrounded by a host, and militia standing guard to keep the peace and save the prisoners from extra-legal procedure, and the courtroom crowded and tense with excitement, the charges against the three alleged murderers were read in a slow, stentorian voice by the clerk. The case was moved for trial, and no objection made when Hines faced the opposition.

"May it please the co't!" Attorney Ruben Gillens rose ponderously and addressed the Judge. "My clients have a desire to exercise their right now to address yo' honor. —Galponeo!"

Galponeo rose to his feet and said:

"I plead guilty." Then he sat down.

The other two stood up, spoke exactly the same words and sat down.

"The old fox!" Judge Dudwitt gasped in admiration. "He's outsmarted the prosecution!"

Gillens grinned ever so little in the direction of Prosecutor Hines, who turned wrathfully to face him. Hines stood blinking. The old lawyer had played a genuine royal-flush hand that time. Course, they couldn't hang anybody who pleaded guilty. Then Gillens rose again and with a fatherly glance at the young prosecutor, he gave a little speech just as though it was extempore and inspired by the occasion:

"May it please the court, there's other little matters I feel should be elucidated by my respective clients, who, despite their appearance of glum dejection, desire to clear up and have done with for all time heah and now. At the moment I'll admit that when I was assigned to their defense I was more stirred by the figure I'd cut than by the accused in their predicament. However, they have authorized me to lay before you their pleas of guilty as regards Matthew Devole and Lucy Devole, whom they shot, purely as a matter of business. And also, on another occasion at the Picnic House, this dark gentleman What-his-name—oh, yes! Giuseppe Galponeo—was present in the capacity of seeing for future identity citizens who might also in the course of business (as he assured those who knew him in a financial relationship) reasonably be expected to be known to him.

"Particularly he studied the features and

mannerisms—he assures me, as his attorney—of one of our most industrious and successful deputy sheriffs—James Morrell, to wit. But at a critical moment Galponeo failed to recognize the officer of the law. Otherwise my clients might not have become prospective residents in one of our most particular and inclusive institutions!

"Possibly," Gillens added thoughtfully, "Galponeo was unable to recall the Deputy-sheriff's normal appearance as legal representative at the dance—very likely due to excitement, when he shot down one Douglas Pound under the impression that he was covering up his dastardly intention of uniting the killing of the man he foully robbed after killing him—Pietro Mistronio—with one of our own mountain imbroglis due to intractable pride and haughtiest of spirits. These three had long known the lamented Mistronio. Personally, for the sake of our own peace of mind, I desire to assure the court that the misunderstanding between our enlightened and dignified family, the Pounds, on the one side, and the brave and unbending Devoles on the other, has been ironed out, smoothed away, and peace articles signed last night in my office. May it please the court, I thank you!"

FOR a time there was silence. The idea that double-dyed scoundrels had hired out to do meanness for both sides while on their own part killing for base objects of robbery, killing a man who was no stranger to them—Well, the idea was stunning. Many an eye rolled, but nobody did anything.

The spectators went outside to talk it over. For a time there was an impression that peace and good will wouldn't last. Hints to that effect were made to Attorney Gillens, Sheriff Corbling and Prosecutor Hines, not to mention Devoles and Pounds. To such scandalous nonsense the sharp retort was made:

"Shucks! Violations and war—no, indeedy! Deputy Sheriff Morrell's going to marry Ruby Devole, personally, officially, according to Church and State. What's more, Sing-low Jack Pound's going to be best man."

Of course, soon as everybody heard that, they stood dumfounded and convinced. Everybody agreed that according to indications, anything might happen, in the peace-with-honor line, yes indeed!

THE END.



"Mean to say
I've changed so
much you don't
recognize me?
You know me,
General! Why,
I'm—"

Free Lances in Diplomacy

"The Carmanian Crisis" shows the Free Lances taking a hazardous hand in a wild drama of Balkan intrigue.

By CLARENCE HERBERT NEW

Illustrated by J. Fleming Gould

IN recent years the Earl and Countess of Dyvnaint have made a point of declining all invitations to social affairs in London or the Continental cities on the ground that their widespread interests make it almost impossible to say where they may be from one day to the next. Upon the very rare occasions when they do appear, it is usually for the purpose of closely observing some person in whose *sub-rosa* activities they happen to be interested. Consequently they spend more evenings in their English, French and Italian homes than people of their popularity and prominence generally do—sometimes with a houseful of guests, but more frequently with not more than one or two. . . .

They were chatting with Earl Lammerford of St. Ives one rainy evening when a man in travel-stained clothes was admitted by their Afghan butler and ushered into the big Jacobean library. The butler had taken his badly rumpled rain-coat, but his

clothes under it were in even worse condition—he needed a shave; there were circles under his eyes.

"I fancy Your Lordship may not recall me," he said, "but—"

"Captain Tom Hepworth, by Jove! Why—I say! Aren't you still at the legation in Carmanstadt—with Sir Henry Seaton?"

"Oh—quite so! But—we fancy there may be a bit of a show on, before long. As a matter of fact—well, we've sources of information, as you know—if this thing breaks, it'll be dev'lish serious. Prob'ly wont run to another European war immediately, but it'll alter the Continental line-up in a dev'lishly dangerous way. I came out in a fast car to Budapest—got a plane, there, to Vienna—another to Le Bourget, an' came down at Croydon half an hour ago—just about thirty-two hours from Carmanstadt."

"Then I take it you've not been to the F. O. yet?"

"What's the use? Labor Governm't—Labor Cabinet! What action could they take even if they decided, after three or four weeks' talk, that possibly something should be done? It's not a question of sending an expeditionary force even if this Governm't would stand for it—acting with a similar French one—in possibly a month. It's an emergency that may break in three or four days. We've gone into it pretty thoroughly at the legation an' consulate. Seems to us that nothing but rather inspired suggestions based upon intimate knowledge of conditions out there will be of the slightest use. It struck Sir Henry an' the rest of us that Your Lordships and the Countess know more about inside Carmanian politics—the various men and women who influence us under the surface—than any other three persons in the British Empire. I suggested putting the show up to you as quickly as I could get here, and seeing if anything might occur to you which we had overlooked. . . . Now, first—to be sure we're talking along the same lines—you know what the situation has been since young Prince Georges was proclaimed king, with a regency made up of Prince Stefan, the Greek Patriarch, an' Doctor Julio Renzogan—after the death of King Bertrand, the grandfather?"

Trevor nodded.

"Oh, perfectly! Georges' father, Prince Jon, who married one of the Balkan princesses and was heir to the throne, always has been weak where women and liquor are concerned. Popular enough—the army used to swear by him. But he got tangled up with a *bien amie*, renounced his rights to the succession, took his lady off to Paris and has been hitting the high spots there. Then King Bertrand died, some time before they really expected he would, and Jon tried to stage a come-back regardless of his renunciation. Had he appeared suddenly among the army officers and led the troops into Carmanstadt, I fancy he'd have pulled it off; but he showed himself rather lacking in the test an' lost out. His boy Georges was proclaimed king, and a regency appointed as you say—presumably controlled by Dowager Queen Claire, who is a British princess as well as one of the most able an' popular women in Europe.

"The reconstructed Governm't after the accession of territory resulting from the War is a constitutional monarchy with a council of ministers acting in executive capacity subject to approval of king or re-

gency. They had some difficulty in satisfying the widely varying classes of people, but finally settled upon a senate of fifty-six members and a chamber of three hundred an' sixty-one deputies. Serge Tatianu formed the first Governm't, controlling four-fifths of the seats. When he died, his brother became premier. Valdaï Tatianu was assassinated by the Peasants' Party, who then got control and made Jon Lariu premier. The National Peasants Party, now in control, can depend upon, I'd say, close to two hundred seats. My impression is that there are several Old Governm't deputies among the National Peasants—but to offset that, the country is mainly an agricultural one. Land was distributed to the peasants, who had none at the end of the war—and they have a number of leaders among them who are of peasant mentality and brutality. Those men are dangerous wherever you find 'em—no telling what insane notion may come into their heads at any moment!"

"HAS Your Lordship any knowledge of General Vitoski?" asked the Captain.

"Why—only in a general way. Peasant stock originally, wasn't he?"

"His father was a socialist Russian school-teacher from Kiev—his mother a peasant in Bucharavia. Most of his earlier years were spent with moujik relatives near Kiev; he secretly considers himself a Russian, though born in a peasant's hut near Bilatz. He has forced his way up in the army through a genius for political intrigue. Although, because of his military position, not a deputy himself, he is said to control nearly a hundred seats in one way or another—at least that's what our legation men believe from the quiet investigations they've made. Vitoski is utterly unscrupulous. We believe him to be in the pay of Moscow because, just now, there are three divisions of the Soviet army undergoing fall maneuvers along the Bucharavian border. In our opinion he means to use Prince Jon as a cat's-paw to start a revolution, with the army backing him—then cut the Prince's throat, declare himself dictator and either run the country under the thumb of the Soviet or else turn it over bodily to Moscow. With his influence among the National Peasants, his military position an' the dummy leadership of Prince Jon, he'll pull off such a revolution without much serious opposition if he springs it within a few days, before the de-

cent element in the country have any chance to get together an' block it.

"What we all fear, at the legation, is another case of Ekaterinburg, with Queen Claire, King Georges, Princes Jon and Stefan, the Patriarch and the Premier as victims. It's the first move Vitoski'd make as soon as he found himself in control."

"I say, Hepworth! Suppose the *Res-boiul*, the *Romanulu* and the *Tribuna Libérale* came out tomorrow morning with an *exposé* of this suspected revolutionary plot, and called upon the Carmanian people to block it at once? Wouldn't that at least delay the program until some measure of defense could be organized? I'll guarantee the leaders in the news-sheets—"

"In the first place, not one per cent of the peasants can read more than the headlines in a news-sheet. The revolutionists would at once send placards with pictures of Prince Jon through the streets, tack them up in the villages and call upon the people to support the rightful king. Then, within forty-eight hours, every editor printing anything of the sort would be assassinated—and they know it. Two *would* print it an' take their chances—they're strong men who can't be intimidated. But I doubt if any others would risk it."

"H-m-m—you've covered that point. Let's consider another: How far could Vitoski and his crowd go if they hadn't Prince Jon to show the people, as a figurehead?"

"Well—I'll say this: I doubt if they'll start anything until they have the Prince with the army inside the Carmanian borders, because they haven't as yet any scheme of governm't blocked out which would sufficiently appeal to all the people. With Jon at their head, they have an argument which might almost sweep the country—and, on the other hand, might be rather a dud when they tried it. But the move would have been made, actual control more or less in their hands. In that case they can afford to dump Jon overboard or quietly cut his throat an' dig themselves in as an established governm't, d'ye see? I wouldn't say positively that they'll not try anything without the Prince—we're of the impression that Vitoski has a stronger organization than anyone dreams, but it's quite possible we may be overestimating it."

"Hmph! Seems to me, Captain, that about the best card we could play at the moment would be to stop the Prince this side of the border—"

"And then—what? How would you pull it off?"

"We'll go into that a bit, an' see. Of course Jon would have to be locked up until Vitoski and his gang are settled with."

EARL TREVOR picked up one of the telephones from the long table and spoke to his private operator in the radio-and telephone-room sixty feet below the gardens at the side of the Park Lane mansion.

"Are you there, David? Put me through to the house of M. le Préfet in Paris. If he's not at home, locate him. Governm't lines will be much too slow—broadcast from the transmitter at Trevor Hall in Devon to our radio-station south of Paris and have the short phone-connection made at that end. Messages for the Préfet have priority."

In less than fifteen minutes, the Préfet's voice came very clearly into the receiver at His Lordship's ear, and they exchanged friendly greetings.

"I say, *mon vieux*! You speak Arabic quite well, do you not?"

"*Oui*, my friend. From ten years in Algeria it is to be seen that one absorbs some understanding. *Oui! Et pourquoi?*"

"It'll do instead of code in discussing a certain matter."

He rapidly sketched the few main points of a possible revolution with Prince Jon at the head—asked if he were still in Paris.

"But yes. Up to an hour ago—of a certainty!"

"Would the *Quai d'Orsay* consider detaining him—in the circumstances?"

"*Peut être*. But, one is of opinion, only after some conference with several of the Ministry—a matter of days or weeks."

"Could the *Préfecture* find any pretext for detaining him—or rather, preventing his leaving France?"

"Observe, my friend! One's hands are tied with legal restrictions—*oui*. But illegal actions sometimes occur of which the *Préfecture* has no knowledge—nor even curiosity. Suppose that one considers something of this sort: An hourly report for one or two weeks—to yourself or Madame la Comtesse at your so-celebrated home in London? *Oui*? It is inferred that certain agents of yours, acting upon those reports, are waiting along the Alsatian border, you observe—they persuade our friend to accompany them, say, to a mountain hut in the *Pays Basques*. *Agents du*



They lugged the senseless men up with them as if it were the wind-up of a friendly drinking bout.

Préfecture in that *departement* are instructed that all of your men are of a respectability and not to be interfered with in their care of an unfortunate man who, temporarily, has lost his reason. Eh?"

AS this seemed quite good enough to act upon, Earl Trevor spent the next two hours communicating with certain men in his employ who were under the immediate orders of an *attaché* at the British Embassy, temporarily on leave. Finally, turning to Captain Hepworth, he asked:

"How much risk of interference will there be if Earl Lammerford and I fly back with you—accompanied by a couple of good F. O. men who can get a month's leave without explaining where they think of spending it? That is—say we make the flight direct from Croydon with one of my latest type cabin-planes in twelve or thirteen hours—they do better than a hundred-an'-fifty, but we'll say a comfortable hundred and twenty with plenty of fuel—coming down at the Jockey Club field, west of Carmanstadt? What are the chances that any of us might be arrested an' detained by Vitoski's lot?"

"The Customs men would ask the usual questions as to your business in Carmania—some of 'em would be, I fancy, tools of Vitoski's. But if your explanation seemed plausible, I doubt very much that you would be interfered with—at least, not before something breaks. And even then

they wouldn't risk a war with England over killing any of the legation people. As for myself, I think I got out of the country without being recognized—but I can dress as one of your plane mechanics, rub some grease on my face an' get away at night."

"My visit would be partly a social one to Queen Claire—partly a business one for the sale of planes to the war ministry. The F. O. men can pass as some of my aviation experts. Perfectly good reasons for being in Carmania. What?"

"Good enough—they'll not interfere with you, upon that understanding. But what does Your Lordship fancy you may accomplish by being in Carmania? There'll be a deal of personal risk if a revolutionary show does break! Even Vitoski couldn't guarantee you from a stray bullet."

"Hepworth—I knew Her Majesty when she was an English princess down in Kent—just before her father, the Duke, succeeded to his father's German duchy. We've been friends for years. An' your mention of Ekaterinburg sent a shiver down my spine—one horror of that sort is enough for a century or two! I fancy all three of us feel the same way about it. To be sure, a party of four men—with possibly another half-dozen whom you may dig up around the legation—is a bit ridiculous for anything in the way of opposition to several thousands of fanatical revolutionists. But the joke of it is that brains sometimes do come out on top, even with odds like

that against 'em. At all events, four of us will go out there with you an' have a look-see. I fancy we need give no personal attention to Prince Jon—that end of the proposition is fairly well in hand, unless somebody makes a fool slip."

AFTER Captain Hepworth had been taken up to a comfortable room, Countess Nan sat before the fire in the library looking at the two men. Presently they asked what she had on her mind.

"I was just wondering whether you two would be chasing off in airplanes, doing this sort of thing, when you get to be over a hundred. That isn't implying you're not fit, you know. I fancy either of you would hold your own in a fight with men half your age. But there does come a time with all of us when we've earned the right to sit back on the side lines and let the younger lot risk their lives in propositions which they are not obliged to undertake."

"Who would you suggest for this particular job, Nan?"

"Oh—there it is—of course! It's a perfectly crazy idea that any two or any ten men can stop a revolution with trimmings of massacre when thousands are being hypnotized into it. But if there are two men in Europe who might pull it off, I fancy I'm looking at 'em!"

"Well—shall we reconsider? Tell Hepworth we're not having any?"

"Hmph—what an absurd question! Were it not for Queen Claire and Georges, I'd say keep out of it. Well—no—I'm afraid I wouldn't, either! Carmania as another Soviet under the control of Moscow would mean another European war inside of five years—I fancy there isn't a question as to that. It simply mustn't happen! France and Italy would put troops in Carmania about as soon as it was certain that the revolutionists were in the pay of Moscow, and we'd be *forced* in if we didn't see that it was our pidgin too. Then the claim would be made that we were 'aggressor nations' under the Kellogg Pact, and— No, I fancy you men will have to go—but if and when you come back, let's go live on some inaccessible South Sea island where we'll never even hear of European affairs!"

WHEN the big cabin plane came down upon the Jockey Club field outside of Carmanstadt, they could see no indication that anything unusual was afoot. A camp of two army brigades was not far off, and

several officers were trying out their mounts around the Club track—but the customs formalities were merely perfunctory. The four Englishmen were permitted to go with their hand-luggage to the new Hotel Nationale on the Calea Victoriæ—apparently not under espionage. Hepworth, in greasy overalls as one of the two mechanics, exhibited the English passport that had been hastily prepared for him during the night before they left London, and it aroused no suspicions.

After dinner at their hotel, the two earls drove around to the legation in the Strada Jules Michelet for a chat with the envoy, Sir Henry Seaton—a bluff, well-set-up Englishman who showed no indication of the anxiety he felt.

"First, Sir Henry—what men of the old régime are there here, upon whom you can depend in a tight spot?"

"Oh, I've a list, you know,—coded, of course,—which I keep in the vaults, below. I doubt if they've anyone who could decode it without a key. Not necess'ry to consult it—practically all the names in my head. There'll be Koteschu—Nariano—Wipschitz—Miron Vladucanu, an' possibly a dozen others—most of 'em close to the regents—about the palace during the day, at one time or another—each having a following in the Chamber of Deputies and among their own people, who are armed with pistols at least. In the army, I fancy there would be five or six brigades which would remain loyal to King Georges an' Queen Claire—but only one of 'em is anywhere near the city."

"Where's General Vitoski?"

"Living at army H. Q. here in the city—in the Chamber an hour or two every day—in the houses of various acquaintances—seen in the popular restaurants an' theaters. Very much in the public eye, in fact. The order of banishment is still in force against Prince Jon, but Vitoski talks openly in the Chamber of his return before long, and ridicules the idea of that order being enforced. Of course all that sort of talk is preparing the public mind for the Prince's actual presence here."

"I say, Sir Henry! When we were in the Cabinet, we managed to get a bill through Parliam't authorizing the Foreign Office to equip every British embassy and legation with wireless of not less than five kilowatts power, both for code an' telephone broadcasting—also to set up equipm't of equal power upon any high ground which

might be available in the country to which the embassy was accredited. The understanding was, when that bill was passed, that such outside stations would be upon ground which the nations permitted us to acquire—but actually they were put up on rather inaccessible ground with as much concealment as possible. Now—just how have you managed about that here in Carmanstadt?”

“We have code an’ phone equipm’nt here at the legation—also two other stations which are supposed, by the only peasants who have seen them, to be controlled by the Carmanian governm’nt—one near the summit of the Carpathians—the other not far from the river, a short distance below Tirnatz—”

HERE one of the legation men came quietly into the room and laid before Sir Henry a slip of paper which read:

Car has just come through Red Tower Pass from Bramannstadt. Man believed to be Prince Jon on rear seat. Party of three will spend night at village of Tirloschi, eastern end of Pass. May wait there for message from Capital.

“I suppose this just came in from the Carpathian station in code, Matthew?” Sir Henry inquired. “Eh?”

“Yes sir—on thirty-two hundred meters. I doubt if anyone in the country is tuning up that far—most of the wireless chat and broadcasting is below two thousand.”

Earl Trevor broke in:

“I say! How far would that village be from here by road?”

“A bit under a hundred miles, I fancy—though the grades would make it count as a hundred an’ twenty.”

“Got a legation car that’ll do eighty, at a pinch?”

“I’ve a car of my own that’ll do a hundred, if necessary! As Your Lordship knows, there’ll be no speed-limit on the country roads here—an’ they’re by way of bein’ good roads, at that. The Carmanians have gone in for ’em ever since the motor-car was proved up.”

“Couple of hours should put us in that village without risk or effort—stopping ten minutes at our hotel for something I’d best take along. Any of your chaps know the road well enough to make it at that speed?”

“Grenning’ll be glad to do it—an’ I’ll chance the car. But what’s it all about?”

“Simply this: Prince Jon is at this moment somewhere along the north slope of

the Pyrenees with three companions to see that he doesn’t get very far in any direction. This man is an impostor if he even looks like Jon. Looks to me as if Vitoski has heard of the Prince’s disappearance from Paris and decided to set up a dummy in his place—dummy now waiting in that village to be fetched in by the General and shown in brief glimpses accompanying him, but hidden most of the time. If we can get to him before Vitoski, I fancy I can do things to his face which, after a few hours, will destroy all resemblance—show the General up in even a brief glance. What?”

“My word! Now who else in the wide world would even have thought of a trick like that? If Your Lordship really can do what you imply, it’s sure to work out against Vitoski with the peasant lot—worth tryin’ at all events!” He touched a button on the desk. “Er—Matthew! Ask Phil Grenning if he’ll kindly get ready for a two-hundred-mile run—an’ fetch around my car at once!”

THEY made the village of Tirloschi, comfortably, in an hour and forty minutes—having no difficulty in locating the small inn where the supposed Prince was stopping with a single companion, the third man having hurried down to the Capital with the car. Apparently a party driving up through the Pass to some city on the west side of the mountains, they had no difficulty in striking up a drinking acquaintance with the other two men—and drugging their wine sufficiently to send both of them off in a heavy drunken sleep. Calling for bedrooms, they lugged the senseless men up with them as if it were the wind-up of a friendly drinking bout and deposited the pseudo-Prince upon a bed, after locking the door. Then Trevor got from his traveling kit some instruments and drugs. As he looked down at the unconscious man, the face seemed strangely familiar—it appeared to be impossible that anyone should have been found in a hurry who was such a perfect double. Lammerford and Grenning noticed it also.

“I say, you know! That’s the most remarkable resemblance I ever saw! What?”

Trevor began to wonder. Taking off the man’s collar and tie, he loosened the shirt and glanced down inside at his back.

“Hmph! I fancied our men in Paris were pretty good for this sort of work, but he fooled ’em, somehow! Who they may have down in the Basque country, I don’t

know—but *this happens to be the Prince himself*. He once spent a week-end with us in Devon—we were in the swimming-pool together—”

“The devil! Rather alters the general lay-out—what?”

“Rather! What I had in mind was severing with a lancet four of the very small tendons holding some of the face-muscles. Wouldn’t have noticeably spoiled his looks, but it would make his face unrecognizable to anyone who knew him well. Then I was going to leave him here for Vitoski to drive into the Capital. We’ll have to revise that program—take him down ourselves and conceal him in the Legation—the only place we can be sure of keeping him from being seen. Question is—do we change his appearance permanently—or only temporarily, with that Hindu swelling-drug?”

“Oh, my word! He’s a Prince of a royal family, you know! Seems a bit—eh?”

“Wait a bit! Let’s consider that point. We know positively that, once that brute Vitoski is through with the chap an’ controlling the country as dictator, he’ll shoot him! He hasn’t the slightest idea of putting Jon on the throne and supporting him there. So—making him permanently unrecognizable is actually making his life a lot safer in future! No getting around either of those facts. On the other hand, he has come into this country as the revolutionary enemy of his own son and his own mother. Even such an irresponsible fellow as he has been has sense enough to know that, in any uprising against the throne, it is extremely probable that the King, the Queen Dowager, the Regents and the Cabinet may be killed as a measure of political safety. He knows perfectly the class of men who are putting him at the head of a revolution. Yet he’s here, inside the prohibited border, ready to proceed at once with such a revolution, regardless of what may happen to his mother and son. If we change his face permanently, they never again will be in danger from him—because nobody will believe his statement that he is really Prince Jon. All things considered, I fancy the most advisable action is to fix the chap so he can’t do any more toward throwing his country into civil war. Eh? We’ve none too much time for the job, either!”

TWO hours later, after working over the Prince with ice and cups of strong coffee to get him groggily on his feet,—four tiny

strips of court-plaster on his face,—they took him out to their car. As the road up the Pass was on the opposite side of the village, the innkeeper had no idea which way they went, but supposed they were going on over the mountains into Hungary. He told this to General Vitoski later, when that irascible demagogue turned up in a fast car with one of the other executives of his organization. The Prince’s companion was finally aroused after much cold-water abuse, but inasmuch as both he and Jon had been just a bit stupid with wine when Trevor arrived, the interpreter could give no clear description of the party who had joined them. Without having anything to base the impression on, Vitoski was as persistently convinced that the party really were driving down to Carmanstadt, after having come over the Pass, as the innkeeper was about their going in the other direction. The scheming General had the choice either of believing that Jon had lost his nerve and gone back, or that, even fuddled with drink, he had stuck to his purpose of entering the Capital and taking his chances. On the whole, he was rather positive that he would find the Prince somewhere in Carmanstadt, lying low until a psychological moment for showing himself.

PRINCE JON was dazed as the car started down the mountain-slopes for the city. He couldn’t figure it out—and there was still enough drug-effect to make him sleepy. In a few minutes, he was snoring on the back seat of the landaulet, and woke up only when they drove in along the Elizabeta just before daybreak. By that time his face was feeling sore and queer; the muscles seemed to be drawing in places where he never felt such a sensation before. Strangely enough, some of the old expression of indecision had disappeared, leaving his face more rugged, but stronger and more attractive than the effeminate good looks he’d had before. Quite awake now, he glanced at his companions in the car—saying in a puzzled way:

“Unless I’m a good bit more balmy than I fancy, you’re Earl Trevor of Dyvnaint and Earl Lammerford of St. Ives. Yet if this isn’t the Elizabeta in Carmanstadt, I’m St. Patrick with an armful of snakes! What the devil are you gentlemen doing here, if I may ask? And how do I happen to be with you?”

“Er—you’re quite right as to ourselves, sir. Here to confer with your War De-

partm'nt on planes. We saw you lying at the side of the road, apparently senseless—backed down, rather fearing you might be dead, but it seemed to be only a heavy sleep. Fancied it must have been quite a party, wherever you'd been—we couldn't seem to rouse you at all."

gation. Sir Henry Seaton has been envoy, here, for ten years, so he knows the Prince very well indeed. I'll not make a cash wager with you, because it's too much a certainty to be sporting. But if Sir Henry says you're Prince Jon, I'll hand you a hundred pounds in sovereigns. What? Come



"I say! Your Lordships will have recognized me, of course? You know who I am?"

They shook their heads in a puzzled way. "Fancy you've the advantage of us, sir," Trevor denied. "Of course one should remember—but one sees so many faces—eh?"

"What! You can't mean— Why, man—I'm Jon of Carmania! I've even stopped with you at your beautiful place in Devon, Lord Trevor!"

"Er—quite so. A good many do in the course of the year. But if you fancy yourself Prince Jon of Carmania, sir—well, you've not entirely recovered from your party. I've known Queen Claire since she was a girl in England—known Prince Jon since he was born. Now—wait a bit! You've not told us where you wish to be set down. If you were Prince Jon, you'd risk arrest, if not a firing-squad, by appearing here publicly—wouldn't do at all to fetch you along to our hotel. Safest place for you in this city would be the British Le-

gation! We'll go to the legation first. Afterward, you will of course go where you please. But really, you know—it's said that politics are a good bit unsettled here just at present. If you're mixed up with them in any way, I fancy you'll not do better than lie doggo for a while in the legation until your head is a bit clearer an' you've had time to make a few plans. What?"

WHEN they reached the legation, Grenning—who had come out to Carmania since the Prince left the country and consequently was unknown to him—went in ahead of them to tip the envoy off on their night's experiences. But Sir Henry would have failed to recognize Jon anyway—could scarcely believe he was actually the Prince. Of course he assured the royal adventurer that he must have had some experience from which he had not fully recovered—saying that he would be welcome to remain at the legation until he was quite himself again. When the Prince was shown to a

room,—dazed with the conviction that something altogether inexplicable had happened to him,—Sir Henry had the two earls supplement Grenning's story with any details which he might have overlooked.

"But, I say, you know! In a few hours, Jon is sure to remember your arrival at the inn—put two an' two together—suspect you must have done something to him. Eh? If he goes about the city, as he can now do without the slightest chance of bein' recognized, he's bound to run across the two chaps who accompanied him—an' one of 'em's sure to recognize all of your party—"

Trevor smilingly shook his head.

"First place—they wont know the Prince from Adam! He couldn't convince them of his identity. Next, when we three arrived at that inn, we didn't look as we do now. It was only a very hasty make-up with grease-pencil—different caps and top-coats—but plenty good enough to fool the innkeeper and two half-fuddled men. Neither of them would recognize us now if we met in broad daylight. Naturally, Grenning had dug up, somewhere, another license-plate for the car. I fancy we met Vitoski on the road—and that when he didn't find the Prince at the inn, he was convinced that Jon must have gone down to the city. If you ask *me*, I'd say he'll be expecting Jon to send him some word within a day or two, and will go right ahead with his plans. So if there's any chance at all for getting a loyal force into the city, to occupy the palace, we can't get things moving too quickly."

"The Minister for War could order in that loyal brigade; but Vitoski owns him—the order, if issued, never would reach General Lupescu."

"Couldn't the regents issue that order as an emergency measure?"

"Aye. If an order signed by them could be placed in Lupescu's hands, he'd march his men into the city without a moment's delay. But I'll wager you'll not get it from the regents!"

"That remains to be seen. We'll call upon Her Majesty this morning after breakfast, get her to send for the regents—fancy we can convince 'em as to what they're up against! Meanwhile you get word, confidentially, to all those Conservative leaders on your list—have 'em arrange for every loyal man to rendezvous around the palace with pistols and cartridges—machine-guns, if they know where to get hold of any, an' I fancy they would. Any sound of firing to be their signal for mobilizing at once."

At the palace, Queen Claire and the young king were delighted to see them. After luncheon, in a room where there was no risk of their being overheard, Earl Trevor said:

"This visit of ours is ostensibly a purely social one to see Your Majesty—with possibly a later discussion of airplanes with your War Ministry. Actually, it's a bit more serious than that. Prince Jon has left Paris—came through the Pass last night—is quite probably hiding here in Carmanstadt at this moment. General Vitoski—an unscrupulous scoundrel, as you know—is backing Jon. His following among the Peasants Party is a formidable one, and he'll have three-quarters of the army with him on any proposition to restore the Prince. Sir Henry is fairly certain that the Sixth Brigade are thoroughly loyal to you and Georges, but they're camped at Noscavina, twenty miles from here. The Eighth and Tenth Brigades, out near the Jockey Club, unquestionably will follow the Prince and Vitoski.

"Throughout the city there are probably a dozen or more of the old aristocracy—Conservative leaders—who are loyal, and have possibly a couple of thousand men who are now being instructed to rendezvous around the palace in case anything breaks loose. But that Sixth Brigade has a first class machine-gun battery, some twenty motor-lorries for transport—and could be fetched into the city in two hours, at night, if Your Majesty can get an order from the regents to General Lupescu. Prince Stefan certainly would sign it—prob'ly Doctor Renzogan also. With two signatures for the regents, we don't need the Patriarch, who'd probably refuse on the ground that the order might precipitate bloodshed. It very likely will—but it makes a heap of difference whose blood it happens to be."

AT first the Queen was rather stunned by Trevor's disclosures. She knew of course that Carmanstadt was seething with intrigue under the surface—but that had been for years a more or less normal condition in every Balkan state. She had come there as the bride of Prince Bertrand during the reign of King Ruprecht and Queen Carmen—had succeeded to the throne with her husband—had married her children to princes and princesses of neighboring states.—had passed through a number of political crises which had left her and her family unharmed. She was, therefore, rather

fatalistic upon the question of personal risk. But there was the question of Georges' safety and that of the regency to consider, and her impression strengthened that the situation might become serious. She sent for her son and the third regent—conferred with them and the two earls. After an hour of it, the order was signed, and their Lordships left in Sir Henry's car.

In less than an hour, they drove into the camp of the Sixth Brigade and asked for an interview with General Lupescu. When the General had grasped the situation and examined the order, he sat considering them in silence for some moments.

"I know all about the Prince's popularity in the army, and I've picked up some evidence of Vitoski's propaganda among the peasants—in this neighborhood, they think him one of the greatest men in the country. Which means that they're constantly spying upon *us*—reporting to Vitoski everything which goes on in this camp. I can throw out patrols this afternoon and head off anyone making for Carmanstadt. But after dark somebody may slip through. By having the sentries keep everybody away from the camp, I think I can get most of the stuff we'll need into the lorries without that fact being known in the town, here. Tents, we'll leave standing for the present. Those of us who can't find sleeping-room on the floors of the palace will simply commandeered space in the neighboring buildings. Once we're ready to move,—say, 'not later than nine—we'll make Carmanstadt within an hour and a half—down the Victoriæ to the Palace; and I think we'll get there before they can move those brigades in from the Jockey Club. If not—we'll cut through 'em with our machine-guns."

WHEN Prince Jon woke that afternoon from a refreshing sleep he felt entirely himself again. His recollection of being fetched to the legation by the two earls was somewhat vague, but it accounted for his surroundings and for Sir Henry's valet, who came in to shave him and draw a warm bath. The man had his instructions about the little bits of court-plaster—he soaked them off with a hot towel but did not mention the fact, and the steaming towel removed most of the soreness which remained. After telling the Prince that dinner was at seven, he went out to fetch a borrowed evening suit, and then retired again.

Jon noticed that his clothes had been cleaned and pressed, and stepped over in

front of the mirror to see if he looked all right—and got the shock of his life. It was not until he had made a number of motions with his head, body and arms that he could believe he was the man whose appearance was reflected in the mirror. Then his thoughts went back to the previous night—to the emphatic certainty of the English peers that he was not Prince Jon of Carmania; and he saw for himself that they had been perfectly justified in that impression. He simply couldn't understand it—wondered if he could be insane, or suffering from amnesia!

THERE was no question as to safety if he chose to go out and walk about the streets. Two days before, he couldn't have done it without being recognized along every block. In a moment, he decided to test this out. Descending to the ground floor, he went out of the front door without objection from any of the legation staff, who greeted him pleasantly in the lower hall.

Sauntering down the Victoriæ, he passed numerous acquaintances who knew him well but didn't give him a second glance. By the curb in front of the leading club was a handsome landaulet in which Vitoski was sitting as he talked through the window with one of the two companions who had left Paris with the Prince—Tomasu Morvitch, who was describing their getting out of Paris in a privately owned airplane, at night. Morvitch didn't believe for a moment that the Prince had lost his nerve and gone back. In the midst of this, the Prince stepped up and clapped Morvitch on the shoulder—nodding to Vitoski, inside.

"I knew you'd come down from Tirloschi this morning, Tomasu! How are you, General?"

At the sound of his voice, Vitoski started forward on the seat and stuck his head out of the window, and Morvitch whirled about with a grin of relief on his face—which relaxed into puzzled anger when he got a look at the man who was speaking.

"And who the devil are *you*—if one may ask?"

"Mean to say I've changed so much you don't recognize me—after our flight from Paris and long motor-ride? *You* know me, General! Of *course* you do! Why, I'm—"

"Don't give a curse who you are! Your voice fooled me at first—it's something like a man I know. What's this all about? We never saw you before!"

"You seem to be sure of that?"

"Positive!"

"I see. Well—excuse me for annoying you. Seems I made a mistake—that's all. Sorry!"

THE two looked after him in a puzzled way as he walked off down the street. Had it not been for that strange familiarity in his voice, they would have handed him over to the police; but something—they'd no idea what—prompted them to let the man go. Morvitch's face was covered with little beads of perspiration.

"*Attendez, mon General!* One was prepared to take some personal risk in coming here with the leader of a revolution, but one was not anticipating the sort of things which seem to be happening. Last evening, the Prince and I were having a second bottle at that Tirloschi inn, after driving through the Pass, when in came a party of three—bound the other way, as we thought. Damned good company—asked us to join 'em—seemed to know the Continental cities very well—told good stories. I don't think they drank us under the table, because the innkeeper said we all went upstairs together. In the morning, you observe, you arrive before daylight and rouse me with a most terrific head. The Prince is gone, with the other party, somewhere—back to Paris, the innkeeper thinks. I come down here with you—this man comes up to us and speaks with Jon's voice. But he is not the Prince—not even a resemblance, except for a similar taste in clothes. When he walks away from us, his back and his motions are those of the Prince. He seemed actually to think we would accept him as the Prince. Well—if he is,—and something has changed his appearance overnight to that extent,—I'm through with this neighborhood! I take the next train out for Paris! I wish you luck with your *coup d'état*—but I'm through!"

"A moment, Morvitch! There is some ground for speculation in what you say. A moment ago I was about to strike that fool with my riding-crop—but something in his voice stopped me. I've heard ridiculous stories about famous surgeons altering a human face completely, but I've never believed them—don't now! Still—something of the sort would fully account for that chap who spoke to us—eh? Of course, if by any incredible chance, he should prove to be the Prince, he's not of the least use here now! The army expects me to show

them Jon as they know and remember him—not a man whose face may have been lifted! There's a rumor all over the city that Jon is actually here. . . . Do you know, I believe, with that rumor, I can pull off the *coup* without showing him at all! The innkeeper recognized him—he'll swear the Prince came down the Pass and spent part of the night there with you. I can swear that the Government, here, is prepared to shoot him on sight—is combing the city for him. That'll stir up even more sympathy! Be ample reason for my keeping him out of sight for the present. By Saint Stefan, I'll do it—at once—tonight! It looked like a washout when the Prince turned up missing, but it may be an advantage after all. Anybody who wires Paris for confirmation will hear that he has disappeared from there!"

LATER that afternoon, Earl Trevor walked into the office of the leading daily news-sheet, *Resboiul*, and made his way back to the small cluttered room used as his office by the editor-in-chief, John Wakeman—who had drifted into the job through an exceptional fluency in the Carmanian language and the itch to run a Balkan newspaper on London methods. As Wakeman looked up from the shaded electric bulb hanging low over his desk from a ceiling-cord, one glance was enough. He had run the Earl's portrait a good many times in his smooth-paper supplement. One arm swept a pile of exchanges off a near-by chair as he pulled it forward.

"Been looking for Your Lordship any time! Had code advices from the Universal Syndicate that you might give us something worth printing. What's up?"

"Prince Jon spent part of last night at the Tirloschi Inn—this end of the Pass—positively identified by innkeeper. Vitoski sent for him to head a *coup d'état* an' reached that inn at three Ack Emma. Prince had left an hour before—is presumably hiding here in Carmanstadt at this moment. Why hasn't Vitoski placed him with those two brigades at the Jockey Club—shown him to the army officers? How much of this do you care to print? How much is safe for you to print?"

"Not one bally word of it! But that's not saying I won't print it; as a matter of fact, I will! Anything else?"

"If Vitoski should mysteriously disappear within twenty-four hours, will you spread a scarehead across the top of your



Heavy fire was concentrated upon the palace, with casualties from bullets which came in reply through the windows.

sheet, asking: 'Has Prince Jon been assassinated? Where is General Vitoski?'

"If I'm dev'lish sure Vitoski has disappeared, I will. If it proves that he hasn't, it's going to be awkward—I'll have to belt on a gun or two, and even then I prob'ly wont last!"

"Oh, you'll be given a chance to look at him if he's gone, I fancy. Of course one never can tell how these proposed 'disappearances' may work out. Usually it's a rather near thing. Well—pleased that we've finally met, Wakeman. I've meant to look you up before, but have been in too much of a rush while here. May be in again, you know."

AS it began to grow dark, there were evidences of unusual activity about the city—an unusual number of officers in the clubs and hotels—Deputies from the Chamber dining with handsome women in the restaurants. Occasional motor-lorries filled with soldiers on leave, rumbling along the streets. While the earls were informally dining with the royal family at the palace, the British envoy sent in a card requesting a few moments' conference with them. A place was laid for him at the table before he entered the room with one of Her Majesty's aides—and he sat down to join them as the aide disappeared. Evidently something had come up within the hour.

The Queen looked across at Sir Henry questioningly.

"It's just this, Your Majesty. Two of our legation men have just come in with a strong impression that lorry after lorry of the troops at the Jockey Club—presumably fetching in liberty-men for an evening's amusement—are really moving those two brigades into the center of the city and posting them to command all approaches from outside. On the other hand, the sidewalks of the Victoria and Elizabetha—theaters and concert-halls—are crowded with citizens, men and women, who unquestionably belong to the loyalist class. I don't see how any messages can have leaked in that the Sixth Brigade are moving tonight—but—"

"They haven't, Sir John!" This from Earl Lammerford. "Lupescu isn't playing with the situation—nobody will get through his lines alive until he's ready to move, and then he'll beat them in."

"An' be trapped at the north end of the Victoria by Vitoski's brigades!" Trevor's deliberate drawl cut in. "Wait a bit! Seems to me the surprise is likely to be the other way around. I'll wager Vitoski hasn't the slightest idea the Sixth will move tonight—he's just decided upon an opening move in his *coup*—simply concentrating his forces at strategic points throughout the city. The army motor-lorries

all look exactly alike—the only way you can distinguish 'em is by the stenciled black-lettering on each khaki top, with the regimental number an' quartermaster's classification. Those lorries of the Sixth Brigade will roll into the city just as these with the liberty-men are doing—nobody will even think of looking at the number on the tilts—old familiar story.

"My impression is that Lupescu's men will be occupying the palace and the buildings around here before they are spotted—also that the mob of loyalists on the streets will be posted near by with some sort of cover to shoot from. There's a point occurs to me which might—not positive, but it might—psychologically settle the whole show. How far would you say the subordinate leaders are likely to go if Vitoski suddenly disappears—can't be found anywhere?"

"My word! He'll not be fool enough to do that! He's by way of bein' the brains of the whole show, d'ye see—gives all the orders, even to the Deputies in the Chamber. If he turned up missing, the rest would be running about like so many hens—every one of 'em knowing that if he gave a wrong order, botching things, he'd be shot without argum'nt!"

"Hmph! Just about what I hoped. Where could we find him within the next hour? He has nothing whatever against us, you know."

"Best not go near him, at that, Your Lordship! It's a bit of personal risk—conditions bein' as they are. . . . You insist? Oh, well, then you'll find him with four or five officers an' politicals dining in the big room at the Hotel Continental—finishing another bottle an' a cigar or two while they listen to the music. Three nights out of four, he'll be there—unless whatever's goin' on tonight hurries him a bit."

"Then—if Your Majesty will excuse us, Lammerford and I will pick up Lieutenant Sorrell, who flew down with us, an' have a few minutes' chat with the General."

VITOSKI had dined well and was in excellent humor when the page handed him a folded note with a few lines in fluent Russian requesting a five-minute interview with the writer and two other politicals in the lounge of the hotel. One of the sentences stirred the General's memory—or he thought it did. The short interview might be of considerable importance; he was getting occasional secret instructions or hints

from Moscow. He got out of his chair, saying that he would return in a few moments, and walked out to the lounge. As they never had met, he didn't recognize the English peers, but their faces were familiar and smiling. Lammerford's voice was low—and much less pleasant:

"General—there are three automatics within a few inches of your body. No matter what happens to us, if you betray the situation by any word or sign whatever, you'll die—and you'll die painfully. If you come out to our car with us, chatting pleasantly, you'll come to no harm at our hands. It is necessary that we have a private interview with you and Prince Jon at once—that's all. Now—may we depend upon your hearty coöperation, or do you prefer dying in a messy way on the floor, here?"

Lieutenant Sorrell handed the man a major-general's fatigue-cap which he had fetched along under his military cape.

Vitoski was too shrewd a fox—too experienced in life's vicissitudes—to question what he was up against. He knew from the steely tone of Lammerford's voice that he would do exactly what he mentioned. So he went smilingly out to their car, continuing to puff at his excellent cigar. Twenty minutes later, after the car had dodged through several narrow streets without being followed, he was confined in a vault under the British legation with a guard seated in the corridor outside. Then—after fetching John Wakeman to glance through a small grating at the prisoner in that strong-room—the earls returned to the Palace.

Her Majesty, Prince Stefan and Sir John were still enjoying their cigarettes at the dinner-table when their English friends reappeared with the calm statement of Vitoski's whereabouts at that moment. They simply couldn't believe it—but were told that they could go to the legation and look at the man if they wished. When Trevor casually mentioned the way the thing had been done, Prince Stefan muttered:

"My God! As simple as that, was it! But—I say, Your Lordship! Suppose he'd resisted—taken the chance of not being injured fatally? Eh? What would you have done?"

"Er—killed him at once, I fancy—nothing else to do. There would have been a lot of confusion in the hotel lounge an' lobby—but not one person in a hundred thousand cares about trying to rush three men with automatics who have just killed

another man. We'd have been out an' away in our car before any effective pursuit could have started."

"Any of the army officers about?"

"Dining-room full of 'em—but we were a good hundred feet beyond the dining-room door. Of course such a play isn't what one would recommend for a nervous person—but it's more likely to succeed than not."

THAT night was a hectic one in Carmanstadt. Just as Trevor had figured out, the Sixth Brigade lorries aroused no suspicion when they came lumbering down the Victoriæ. Had Vitoski been at liberty, he might have investigated them; but he wasn't—and the loyal soldiers quietly took possession of the palace. In one of the popular dance-halls Prince Jon was drinking by himself at a table in one corner—trying to realize how completely the whole course of his life, his position in the world, his prospects and possibilities, had become sidetracked into comparative obscurity by the change in his appearance, which he couldn't account for except as a possible form of neuritis which had atrophied some of the facial muscles. He was fairly sure that his Paris physician could be made to recognize him and explain this sufficiently to satisfy his bankers—but nobody else would believe the explanation if it were published.

Then—a handsome and brilliant girl of the aristocracy thought his face vaguely familiar—liked it, took a chance, and bowed. In a few moments they were dancing. Introductions, under an assumed name, to other women followed. He found that he need not be lonely—that he possessed rather more fascination for women than before—which was, for him, some compensation. . . .

Vitoski had ordered one of his brigadiers, at dinner, quietly to occupy the palace some time after midnight and assume charge of the royal family. In his absence, the brigadier carried out his orders, blindly—to be met with a crumpling machine-gun volley which stretched many of his men upon the pavement. He sent, hastily, for reinforcements—which were fired upon from doors, windows and side alleys as they came up. Heavy fire was concentrated upon the palace, with casualties from bullets which came in reply through the windows. The earls had taken her Majesty and Georges down to the cellars at the first burst of firing, and, as the attack became

hotter, began to wonder if Vitoski's subordinates would really attempt to pull off a revolution without either him or the Prince.

After considering the situation all round, Trevor turned to the Queen:

"Claire—we're much too old friends for ceremony in a show like this! It seems to me that you and Georges are much better out of it until matters settle down again. I happen to know there is an underground passage from these cellars to a house on the Strada Campineau, where there isn't any firing at present. Our plane is out at the Jockey Club with the pilot and mechanic—tanks full. One of your aides can get to the legation an' fetch Sir John's car. Eh?"

"It's good of you, old friend, and I haven't a doubt you'd manage somehow—you two are rather wonderful men, when all's said and done! Take Georges if you will—and Stefan. As for me—my place is here with my soldiers who are dying to protect me. My war-experience as a nurse will be valuable before daylight."

"Very good! One rather fancied that would be your attitude. An' neither Stefan nor Georges will leave you. For that matter, neither will Lammy, or the men we fetched along with us—or I. One doubts if this show will go much further after the news-sheets are on the street in the morning. Even the peasants have been sold by Vitoski—an' they'll soon find it out."

AND this impression proved to be well founded. No rising started in the country-towns or villages, because no orders had come from the leader of the proposed revolution. Telephoned messages started question and discussion all through the country. Had Prince Jon been assassinated? If not—where was he? Where was General Vitoski—who hadn't been seen since he left the dinner-table in the Continental?

Two mornings later a man stopped his car on the climb through Red Tower Pass and looked down across the Carmanian plain. He once had renounced all claim upon its throne—and now a strange mishap had made that renunciation permanent!

At about the same hour Vitoski was facing a firing-squad.

"Not, perhaps, so much of a show," as Captain Hepworth remarked when the two earls were climbing into their plane for the flight home. "But—my word! It *might* have been, you know!"

Richelieu III

*A specially engaging story of Kentucky folks,
of a great horse and of a great horse-race.*



“WELL, what do you call this?” demanded Barney Moore, the trainer of Oakmead’s stable.

Following his glance, I saw slowly coming along the gravel drive a round-sided dun-colored horse, his old head nodding in unison to his placid stride. Crunching its way behind him was a wide-bodied two-wheeled cart, and cresting the whole, a broad-spreading canvas umbrella. Upon the single seat was a man in whose eyes lurked an expression that, so it seems to me, should not come to the eyes of a man of his years. (That day he was but turned fifty.) At his side, stiffly erect, small hands primly folded upon dimity-covered lap, sat a little lady perhaps twelve years old, whose deep blue eyes calmly observed us from beneath the starched brim of her sun-bonnet.

The dun horse halted and munched the grass along the edge of the drive; the young lady, hands still primly folded, continued studying us; the man stepped over a wheel of the cart and drew near.

“Gen-tle-men.” There was the hint of a pause between the syllables.

“Mornin’,” said Barney.

“Are you—the master—of Oakmead?”

“No’sir; I’m trainer here. The Boss is in Louisville. Moore’s my name. Anything I can do for you?”

“I would like—my daughter and I would like—to look over your fillies and mares.”

It struck me, as he spoke, that his long figure stiffened a little and that his lips came closer together.

“You mean—with a view to buyin’?” asked Barney.

“Yes sir.” The man nodded.

BARNEY paused momentarily. Certainly a man dressed as was our visitor and who traveled about the country in a two-wheeled cart drawn by an old dun horse did not seem one situated to purchase any of the pampered thoroughbreds of Oakmead; but a vague something about the man—perhaps the squaring of his shoulders or the look in his eyes or that which lurked at the corners of his mouth—made Barney forget such things as threadbare coats and strange modes of travel. “Glad to show you,” said he. “Just follow me.”

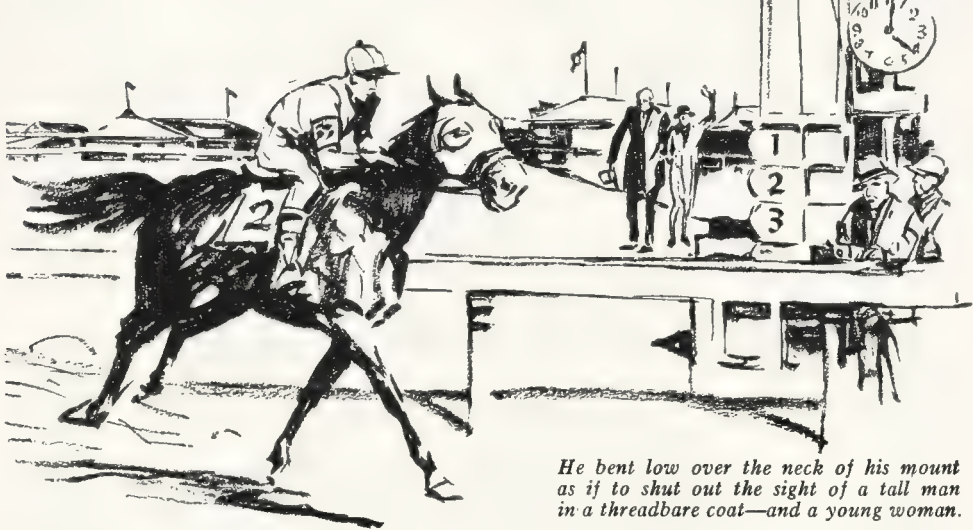
“I thank you, sir. First, permit me to get my daughter.” And he assisted that prim young person to the ground.

Barney led the way through the stables and pastures, down past Mercy Lodge—where Little Gill lives—on past the “quarters” and into that walnut-bordered pasture we still call the tobacco field. Perhaps ten coming-two-year-old fillies were there, raising sleek heads as they heard the clang of the gate.

“Now these,” began Barney, “are a likely lot. Most of ’em by Redmead and the rest by Starling.”

By EWING WALKER

Illustrated by William Molt



He bent low over the neck of his mount as if to shut out the sight of a tall man in a threadbare coat—and a young woman.

Our visitor studied them closely, one hand, the while, holding that of the sunbonneted young lady at his side. Then: "You have others?" he asked.

Barney glanced toward me, and a deeper tinge of red came over his ever-red face. "Others? Sure, but—"

I shook my head warningly, and with a deal more restraint than he is accustomed to display he held the words back. "Plenty more," he said at last. "Now, over yonder past the track is a batch of our choicest, but I doubt whether the Boss would part with a one of 'em." And he led the way over past the track, and reaching into a pocket, with some sugar enticed those trim-limbed young bluebloods close to us, so that our visitor might view them close at hand.

Our tall and taciturn guest went over them one by one with a calm, and, I saw, a knowing eye. Done with the last,—and a rarer lot is seldom met with,—he turned to Barney. "Are these—all?" he inquired in his low-pitched and oddly halting voice.

"All?" Once more Barney was upon the point of spluttering. "No, they aint all; but—"

Again I shook my head.

Our visitor took a slow step toward Barney, glanced at him a moment, peered off a longer one toward a clump of honeylocusts and then looked at Barney again—

looked at him, I thought, with a bit of a plea in his glance. The young miss at his side tilted her chin and flung her head till the stiff sunbonnet came askew. Evidently she knew what was coming and dared us to gainsay it or even smile.

"My friend," said our visitor, "I owe you—an explanation. You've shown me some wonderful youngsters—a credit to any man's establishment. Many of them, as you say, could not be bought—at any price. Yet not one of them suits me. I mean no disparagement. The whole thing is—" Once more he paused and looked off, unseeingly, across a rolling meadow of timothy; and once more he turned to Barney. "I had the privilege—and the honor, sir—of breeding a great horse. Trevelyan is my name," he added in his halting way.

Barney granted him a surprised look. "You're the Trevelyan that bred Richelieu—the Derby winner?" It seemed Barney's turn to punctuate his words with pauses.

The other nodded, and I fancied his head came a little higher and his shoulders a bit more squared.

The impulsive Barney extended a rough hand. "You spoke a mouthful, sir! You raised a hoss!" And in Barney's tone that speech was high praise.

WITH our visitor's pronouncement that he bred the great Richelieu, a change came over us all. I found myself glad I

had shaken my head and pursed my lips at Barney; the trainer's eyes glowed and a smile wrinkled the red face of him; the young miss granted us a look that left the brim of her sunbonnet seeming less stiff and repellent; and as for Colonel Trevelyan—well, the alloy of humility seemed, for the moment at least, to leave his bearing.

"Come along," said Barney, taking the Colonel by the elbow. "There's some three-year-olds and aged mares I'd like for you to see."

TREVELYAN drew back. "Before we go," he began, "I should tell you more—why I'm here, and what I'm looking for. You know the end of Richelieu. I raised one colt—by him."

"Promising?" asked Barney.

"He'll never face a barrier."

"You mean—"

"The morning he was three days old, when we went to his stall, we found his off-foreleg broken. Somehow, during the night, his mammy—" He glanced away a long moment; and once he had turned to us again, a faint smile rested upon his long thin lips, and his hands were momentarily spread before us. "He's the last of the line," he added.

"I see," muttered Barney. "So you're lookin'—"

"I'm looking," Colonel Trevelyan said, "for a mare—for *the* mare—to mate with him. What she must be, I could hardly tell you; but once I find her, I'll know her. When I raise a colt out of her by Richelieu II, the blue and orange—my colors, sir—may be on another Derby winner."

I nodded agreement, for I could think of no fitting response; Barney swallowed a time or two and moistened his lips.

A stable-boy approached us laggardly.

"What do *you* want?" barked Barney; and from his barking, I knew it was a pleasing interruption.

"Jus' walkin' round," the lad explained.

Colonel Trevelyan leaned toward him, the stiffness gone from his bearing. "What is your name, my boy?"

"Ab Bruner."

"Ab?"

"Yes sir—Absalom."

Our guest glanced at the youngster's diminutive boots. "You ride, I see."

"Yes sir; I work out some of the horses."

"Want to be a jockey, eh?"

"Yes sir. More'n anything."

"Well, that should be easy. Let me see your hands."

Ab extended them, and the Colonel took them in his own and held them before him, palms up. "You've a good—pair of hands," he pronounced. "Take care of them, always take care of them, for they are what will win or lose races for you. Don't abuse them. Above all,"—a kindly smile played upon his lips,—"*never let them pull an honest horse. Keep them clean, my boy.*" He turned to Barney. "If you have any more—fillies or mares—"

Barney led the way; and as we walked along, I noticed Ab glancing reverently toward our guest and toward a large and stiff sunbonnet and toward two great dark blue eyes beneath it.

Soon we were done; we had seen every filly and every mare on the place, and the Colonel had worded his appreciation. "A wonderful lot," he assured us. "Finer probably don't live; but the one—the particular one—I'm looking for isn't here."

So, in a little while more, an old and fat and dun-colored horse was passing down our driveway, drawing behind it a two-wheeled cart beneath whose spreading umbrella sat a thin-lipped man, and rosy-cheeked young miss with hands primly folded upon dimity-covered lap.

As I turned toward the "big house," I came upon Ab, now gazing after the departing cart and again soberly observing a large red apple he held in his hand.

"Who gave it to you? The Colonel?" I asked.

He eyed me a moment. "No sir. *Her.*"

PERHAPS you know the story of Richelieu. Certainly you do if you chance to know the long, low barns, the alluring odor of oats and hay, the milling crowds, the bugle-call, the shout "They're off!" In short, if you know the racing world, you know the story of Richelieu. But for fear you do not know that colorful principality, I will tell it to you, briefly.

Foaled at Blue Hills, the home of Colonel William Trevelyan, Richelieu was taken to the races late in his two-year-old form, and in his four starts so impressed the "talent" that he was made favorite in the winter books on the Derby. Finally, on that eventful day in May, he took the lead before ever the field reached the first turn, lengthened that lead, and as the saying goes, won going away. That summer

he was campaigned in the East, winning a number of stakes and two match-races; then back to Kentucky and a lowering October day that Uncle Billy—or Colonel Trevelyan—rarely speaks of, but which the rest of us recall when racing folk foregather and bygone Derbies are mentioned.

A prideful and mincing parade past the stands, a turning and a slow approach toward the barrier, an unruly—well-nigh an outlaw—horse in the field of eight, the crackling of starters' whips and the barking of starters' voices—at last the clang of a gong, the hiss of a tape, a wild-eyed near-outlaw lunging sideways, a crashing of timber as Richelieu went through the rail into the ditch beyond. A futile struggle to regain his feet; sighs and muttered oaths from the crowd, that forgot seven racing thoroughbreds and feverishly watched their State's favorite striving to stand upon his three sound legs; a hurrying veterinarian, who leaned over and who, in a little while, rose, shaking his head. A puff of smoke, the crack of a pistol—and from the crowded stands one vast sigh that seemed to rise and float away and finally lose itself in the dark low-scudding clouds above. A man bending over and biting thin lips a moment and then saying, as a trembling hand cupped itself over two lifeless but wondering and still-dauntless eyes: "Good-by, old friend! Good luck! It's waiting for you there—your place in Valhalla."

And the crowd, sitting strangely tense and strangely still and strangely indifferent to the result of the race just run, saw this man rise and hurry across the infield, a little girl at his side running to keep up with his uncertain stride.

The following day, as some of you will recall, and as all of you who think racing a thing in which sentiment plays no part should know, Richelieu was buried in the infield at Windsor Downs.

THAT, in brief, is the history of Richelieu, who left but one son behind—a son that would never face barrier and that, though his head was flung high, moved with a limp in his off-foreleg.

Most of this I remembered; the rest Barney supplied.

"And the Colonel's wife?" I asked.

"She died when the child came."

"Where does he live?" I persisted, for this tall threadbare man, with somber blue-gray eyes and even more somber long thin lips interested me.

"Out from Paris. Had quite a place once, but most of it's gone. Calls it Blue Hills. If all I hear's true, things have broken badly for Colonel Trevelyan."

AS the years passed, I heard of him in many quarters—in fact, in all quarters where thoroughbreds are raised—in the rolling hills of Kentucky and Tennessee, in the valley of Virginia, up Warrenton-way, in Maryland and New York State.

Five or six years after his first visit to Oakmead, a friend from Charlottesville told me of his coming.

"In his cart?" I asked.

"Cart? No. He was driving an old car."

"Daughter with him?"

"Sure. She's always with him. When he started away, I asked him where he was going. 'Oh, here and there about the State,' he said, 'and maybe down near Philadelphia. I've heard of a mare down there—' But he never finished; he just cranked up the old boat and rattled away."

And then I met him again. Winter racing was on in New Orleans. I had gone into Courtois' place and was glancing over the menu when a precise voice at my elbow exclaimed:

"How—do you do, sir?"

Glancing up, I recognized Trevelyan. Seven years had passed since I saw him at Oakmead, and each of those years had wrought its change. The hair was more gray about the temples, the figure a little more bent, the blue-gray eyes, if possible, more sober.

"If you will do me—the honor, sir, to dine with—my daughter and me?"

I accepted gladly, and he led me to a half-hid table in a remote corner of the room; and as I walked at his side, I remembered two small hands primly folded upon a dimity lap and two great dark blue eyes peering out at me from beneath the brim of a stiffly starched sunbonnet. Another moment I found myself bowing before as delectable a young being as it has been my lot to see. Seven years—she would now be nineteen or twenty—had done deft work and melted into the nothingness of the past.

It was she who recalled their trip to Oakmead. "You were very kind to us that day."

"Kind? Why, I—"

"Yes. I saw you shake your head at your trainer when he was about to say

something unpleasant. What has become of the little boy?" she broke off.

"Little boy? I'm afraid—"

"His name—was Absalom," interjected Colonel Trevelyan. "It isn't a name to forget."

"When you-all weren't looking, I gave him an apple—the only one I had," she admitted.

"I remember. He was terribly impressed."

"I'm glad of that," she laughed, "for I was ravenously hungry."

JUST then a somewhat noisy party entered Courtois'. Two young ladies led the way, two young ladies who could not enter any café without being noticed. Behind them walked Terry Mooney, race-rider, and last of all, none other than Ab Bruner.

I was sorry Fate had so dealt the cards that Ab entered that particular café at that particular time; yet there was nothing odd about it, for Courtois', after all, is a rendezvous for racing folk. I could but talk the faster and lean a little nearer my companions.

"Have you horses here, Colonel?" I asked.

At that he straightened. "One, sir. And—I think him worthy of his grandsire."

It was my turn to straighten a bit. "So you found—"

He nodded slowly. "Yes sir, down near Nashville. I believe, sir, she's destined to be the dam of another Derby winner—in the blue and orange."

"What do you call the colt?"

"Richelieu III."

"Did he show you much as a two-year-old?"

"He never faced the barrier." I started as laughter, a trifle too loud, reached me from Ab's table. "I don't believe in crowding a youngster," Trevelyan added. "Many three-year-old races are lost through two-year-old victories."

I NODDED assent. Another peal of laughter reached me, and I glanced toward Ab's table. He recognized me, grinned and waved his hand; then his eyes moved to my companions, and as they rested upon Ann Trevelyan, the mirth left them. I saw him stiffen and gaze at her a moment longer; then abruptly he twisted his chair about so that his back was toward us.

The next evening I was host, and again we went to Courtois'. I wanted to know more of this colt Richelieu III, and of his dam and of the weary search for that dam.

We had but seated ourselves, when I heard a voice at my shoulder exclaim: "Good evening!"

Glancing up, I saw Ab smiling down at me.

Rising, I gripped his hand.

"I've had that pleasure," he stated, when I would present him to my friends.

"It's been a long while," said Ann.

"It has; but to show you I remembered, I was tempted to bring you a present."

"An apple?"

He nodded.

All in all, it was a pleasant evening. As we parted that night I saw the Colonel take Ab's hand in his own and turn its palm upward. "I wonder," he began in his slow, halting fashion, "if you happen—to remember—what I once told you of your hands."

"All of it, sir."

"And I wonder if those hands have ever—"

"Come along, my boy," I called, hurriedly interrupting that journey over what I knew to be thin ice.

Did the Colonel know more of Ab than he would have led one to believe? I wondered.

AS all race-goers know, the best position from which to view a race is opposite the finishing line, and the worst is at the end of the grandstand. Just why Colonel Trevelyan and Ann stood or sat each day in that worst of places, it would be difficult to say. Perhaps they had been alone so many years on their strange quest that it had come a habit with them.

On a certain Thursday in late November Richelieu III started in a six-furlong sprint at Jefferson; and before they had covered half the distance, I knew that rich chestnut with blazed face and four white stockings had the race sewed up, as we say. He won by three open lengths. I hurried to Colonel Trevelyan to offer my congratulations, and I found him standing very erect and very composed and wearing an air that seemed to say: "Of course he won handily! What else did you expect, sir, of the grandson of Richelieu?"

All in all, the colt started four times during the New Orleans season, and in each of the races he won "going away."

I have found myself, at times, wishing to forget some of the incidents in the lives of Colonel Trevelyan and Ann—some of the dreary things that fell to their lot; and I find myself now wanting to slur over certain things about Ab. But after all I fancy all of us would gladly enough turn a page in some chapter of our lives or draw

him; field judges threatened him; stewards watched his every move from tape to finish; but as Barney would say, they never "got anything" on Ab. A money-rider? One of the keenest. So, meet after meet and season after season, he went hand in glove with his associates of the Live Oak stable, Messrs. Colby and Bloom.



A wild-eyed near-outlaw lunging sideways—a crashing of timber as Richelieu went through the rail into the ditch.

the blinds before the windows of some chamber of our past.

Since you first met him, the boy had, I might say, graduated from Oakmead. He had served his time as stable- and exercise-boy, had obtained his license as apprentice rider and then had gone to another stable. I lost sight of him for a year or two, save for an occasional item in the *Telegraph* or a line in the racing form; then the story was given me—a little here, a little more there till, finally I had the whole of it.

Ostensibly, he was under contract to the Live Oak stable, but in reality, he was one of that somewhat dubious establishment. To the knowing ones, he was, above all else, a "money-rider." Under his skillful guidance a favorite, whose price was too short, would lose while apparently being urged to do its utmost by Ab; seeming "dogs" ridden by him would, race after race, finish in the ruck, and then, when all was right, come home in front at a price both sweet and startling. Starters warned

Reprehensible? Of course; but—human enough, I fancy. He was fifteen when he left Oakmead, having a knowledge of horses and their whims, and with a pair of hands found once in a blue moon. Inviting-eyed young women smiled upon him; fox-eyed bookmakers courted him; lynx-eyed "rail-birds" toadied before him. A money-stable, finally, was built around his indubitable talents.

THE last night of the New Orleans season, the four of us—the Colonel, Ann, Ab and I—were again dining at Courtois'.

"I see," remarked the Colonel, handing me a folded paper, "they've made my colt favorite—in the Derby."

I glanced at the price—eight to one. "Do you think he'll start?"

His long thin lips came together, and a look of surprise stole into his blue-gray eyes. "Start, sir? As surely as he can stand upon his legs. I've waited—and planned—"

I turned to Ab. "So you're going to Tia Juana?"

He shook his head. "Louisville."

"I thought I saw—"

He smiled. "Changed my mind."

I glanced toward Ann. Her eyes were calm enough, but I fancied I saw a bit more color than usual in her cheeks.

I MISSED the early spring racing at Lexington, but a day or two before they opened at Louisville I was on hand in my old quarters.

My second evening there I was sitting in the lobby of my hotel when a low-toned voice at my back—a marble column separated us—remarked: "Well, things are lookin' pretty."

"Mean for the Derby?" asked a second.

"Sure! What else? It was a two-hoss race at best an' now it's a one-hoss one." All of this in an undertone.

His companion struck a match. "Talked to Ab?"

"Last night."

"Agree—does he?"

"I'll say so! Why wouldn't he? Ab aint nobody's fool. It's a clean-up."

"That's O.K. far's it goes," rejoined the other, "but did he say he'd see the colt didn't win? 'Pears to me he's gettin' mighty thick with that girl o' old Trevelyan's."

The other snorted. "Aw, forget it! I spreads the cards on the table; I gives him the whole lay-out. 'We're layin' the colt,' I says. 'He's six to one now, an' he'll go to the post not over three. I've sent a roll,' I says, 'to Dierks in New York, and to Nusbaum in Detroit, an' to the boys in Cincinnati an' St. Louis.' 'What'll their cut be?' he asks. 'Ten per cent,' I tells him. 'It's a pipe,' I says. 'We'll make a clean-up. Sweet, eh?' 'Yes,' he says, 'grinnin', 'that sure will be sweet.'"

"What does Ab think o' Skylark?"

"Same as we do. Skylark bein' in there makes it a set-up."

"How come?"

"Well, dumb-bell, where's the old think-tank? Everybody from the stewards to the blind program sellers know Richelieu's a runnin' horse r'arin' to go. Wouldn't do to let some outsider beat 'im. Too much talk, too many questions to answer; but with a hoss like Skylark in there, it's different. It aint no disgrace to let that kind nose you out. I goes over all that with Ab, an' I says to 'im: 'Skylark's got one

fault,' I says; 'he *will* bear out; he's a fool for runnin' wide at the turns. All you got to do,' I says, 'is stay on the *outside* of 'im, pull some of your fancy ridin' an' spend the money. It'll be like takin' candy from a baby,' I says, 'cause Dugan, who's ridin' Skylark, will be hell-bent on huggin' the rail anyway, an' on havin' some of you on the outside to help keep Skylark from crowdin' out; so all you gotta do,' I says, 'is let Dugan get on the inside o' you an' stay there.'"

Was I eavesdropping? Perhaps I never thought of it at the moment, and had I done so, I would have sat right on taking in the untasty tale; and the longer I sat and the more I thought of that tall graying figure, with a little girl at its side, riding through the hills and flats of a dozen States in quest of a mare that would bring another draught of glory, the more eager was I to hear the whole of it.

Finally they were done, and quietly as might be, I rose, circled down the lobby, crossed to the other side of it, and sauntered back toward my two informants. I recognized the short, plump-handed and wily Bloom and the long and bony and wily Colby, co-owners, with Ab, of the Live Oak stable.

I was waiting for Colonel Trevelyan and Ann when they came through the hotel's swinging doors.

"You must have dinner with me," I said.

"I thank you, sir, but I understand my daughter and Ab are dining with some friends, and—"

That was to my liking. "Then you come, Colonel," I urged. "Let the old horses pasture together." And so it was arranged.

THAT evening we dined early. I was impatient to get to the bottom of this thing. "Who's riding your colt in the Derby, Colonel?"

"As fine a rider, I believe," he stated, "as is in the profession today."

"And that's—"

He granted me one of his rare smiles. "Our young friend Ab."

I toyed with my silver, glanced about the room, scrutinized the candelabra above us. Abruptly I turned to him. "Colonel, I hope you'll believe it would make me very happy to see Richelieu III win."

"I'm sure of that, sir," he acknowledged.

"And I believe, barring bad breaks and given the right ride, he can."

His shoulders squared; a long moment he looked across the table toward me. "My friend—and I think I may call you that—last night I visited the grave of a great horse—my stanch old friend, sleeping out there at the Downs; and, as I sat there, I felt a little disloyal—for there came to me the thought that this colt—that Richelieu III—is a greater horse than his grandsire. I—I did not like the thought, sir." He spread his long hands before me; he smiled a little wistfully. "You must think me—very foolish."

"I think you—" I began; but something was amiss with my throat, something born of the memory of a two-wheeled cart trundling over the hills. At last: "Colonel, don't let Ab ride your colt."

He eyed me narrowly. "I've already engaged his services, sir."

"Then cancel 'em."

"Cancel them? That would be unfair to the boy; besides, he's a smart rider, sir."

I smiled dourly. "Maybe too smart. I overheard a conversation today—" And I told him of most of it—told him as he observed me with no hint of surprise or bitterness or chagrin in his look.

When I had done, he leaned toward me and tapped my wrist with the tips of his fingers. "My friend, we mustn't be too hard on the boy; we must remember he has been—very young. At heart, he is all right. I think I can see that—in his eye, sir."

"That may be all true," I protested, with more than a little heat, "but it's also well to remember you've waited a long while—"

He glanced down at the table. "Yes, a long while. A long while."

I thrust back my chair. "I'm going to have a talk with that young man," I stated. "I have the right, for he was at Oakmead once, and—"

He looked up, startled. "You must not do that, sir! You must promise me you will not do that! It would humiliate the boy." He turned toward the darkened window at his side. "If you knew, as do I, the bitterness that comes of humiliation—"

ABOUT noon on Derby day I hurried over to the barns and found the Colonel slowly walking back and forth before the stall of Richelieu III, now and again pausing to exchange a word with some acquaintance or, in his kindly fashion, to chat with some eager-eyed stable-boy. Occasionally, when he fancied none looked on, he would

halt before the half-door of Richelieu's stall; whereupon I would see his thin lips move and, at the moving, find myself wondering as to the message that crossed them.

Joining him, we turned to study the white-banded chestnut head thrust over the half-door. "I see by the papers," I began, "Ab's to ride after all."

"Of course, sir!" His blue-gray eyes for a moment looked steadily into mine. "While I think Richelieu III can run his own race, it's but fair to him—and to his grandsire—to have a good boy aboard him."

RATHER than stand there futilely, seeing each nauseous act of the sordid drama unfold, I made my way across the infield and into the stands, that already were filling.

So Ab was to ride Richelieu III! To Ab, of the Colby-Bloom combination, the Colonel had entrusted the consummation of his ten years' quest! An hour passed. I glanced toward the end of the stands, where the Colonel and Ann were accustomed to stand, but I could not find them. Two o'clock came—and three. The first race was run—and the second, and the third; and still I searched the end of the stands for my friends and still I failed to see them there.

So Ab was to ride Richelieu III! I hurried down into the palm garden and placed a sizeable wager on the horse. I felt, somehow, that if I wagered and lost—and certainly I would lose!—I would be, in small degree, sharing the Colonel's disappointment; vaguely, and foolishly, I felt that, by having a little bitterness in my own cup, I would be tempering his by just that much.

The fourth race was run, and the crowd milled and seethed as one great human vortex, for in thirty minutes the Derby would be run, as it had been run fifty-two times before. Faces about me grew red—or pale and drawn; handkerchiefs touched moist foreheads; men whispered and called and shouted; women laughed vacantly. Of the whispering and talking and calling and shouting was born a pulsating volume of sound alike the ominous gathering of a distant storm. As I buttoned and unbuttoned my coat and clasped and unclasped moist, cold fingers, I searched in vain the end of the stand for Colonel Trevelyan and Ann.

A betting commissioner whispered into a jeweled ear; two voices, near by, were



*"That's O.K. as far as it goes,"
rejoined the other, "but did he
say he'd see the colt didn't
win?"*

raised in an altercation—two voices redolent of libations; in the box adjoining mine, a man with a colt starting in the Derby discussed, with poorly shammed nonchalance, the stock-market, his face drawn and pallid the while; a hand, hidden in scented glove, thrust a roll of bills into the hand of a commissioner, who scurried away to place a last-minute bet. . . . Derby day—one of fifty-odd that stretched back through the glorious and the blithe and the troubled and the drab years into the misting past.

THE sight of a scarlet coat atop a piebald pony snatched me back from my reveries, and I sat erect and tense as eighteen thoroughbreds paraded past the stands. My breath came faster as my eyes rested upon Skylark, black and glistening as a bit of polished ebony, with seeming disdain in the tossing of his head and defiance in the gleaming of his eyes. Then my own eyes came upon a rich chestnut with four white stockings and a white band down the silken nose of him; and, with the sight, I found I still could smile with confidence. Walking along with his far-reaching stride, with his head held high and well-nigh motionless, he lacked the fire of black Skylark, but he owned a certain—What shall I say? Dignity? The quiet assurance that comes of the consciousness of worth?

I looked toward Ab as he rode by; and I saw him glance swiftly toward that end

of the stand where the Colonel and Ann should be; and I saw a look of surprise come over his face when he failed to find them there. He turned his head the other way; and I saw his hand raised, as in a restrained salutation; then he bent low over the neck of his mount, as though to shut out the sight that had met him. Beyond the track and perhaps a third of the way across the infield, rose a low, sod-covered mound, at the edge of which stood a tall, thin-lipped man with threadbare coat buttoned tight across his breast. At his side was a young woman. One hand was pressed to her lips; from the other, held high, a handkerchief fluttered.

"*They're off!*" It was murmured or hissed or shouted as eighteen driving forms came hurtling down the track. As they passed me, they were as but so many spokes of a wheel turning before my vision, for I was looking through them and beyond them.

As the horses rounded the first turn, I focused my glasses upon them. Nearing the quarter-pole, they divided into two racing, frenzied, eager groups. In the first of these I saw black Skylark, a living, quivering, fiery embodiment of speed. A half-length behind him, flashed the white stockings of Richelieu. On down the back stretch they raced and this leading group was broken and lengthened. Skylark was on the rail and, neck-and-neck with him, a dark bay called Pomegranate. Less than a

length behind these two was the chestnut Richelieu, running with a far-reaching, effortless, swallow-like stride.

They rounded the far turn, and the bay Pomegranate was left behind; they whirled into the stretch and the battle lay between black Skylark, still in the lead on the rail, and chestnut Richelieu, on the outside a half-length behind. And as I held my glasses with unsteady hands, I recalled the words of Colby and Bloom: For Ab to stay on the outside of the black colt that liked to run wide—and to be carried wide with him!

I waited to see what his move would be; and when I saw, I found myself holding my glasses at my side and inanely smiling, through a mist that foolishly had gathered before my eyes, toward two figures over in the infield. For I had seen the boy pull up his chestnut mount a trifle, let the brilliant and erratic black Skylark draw away from the rail, and crouching lower as though to whisper into a low-pressed chestnut ear, hustle Richelieu through on that rail!

A vast, rolling, tumbling shout drew my glance back to the track in time to see a white-stockinged chestnut, with flowing stride, sweep past the judges' stand a length in the lead of Skylark.

HURRYING below, I watched the Colonel, with Ann at his side, cross the green infield and come upon the track beneath the judges' stand. And once more something was amiss with my throat as I saw him, thin lips a little parted and a new light in his blue-gray eyes, take the bridle of Richelieu III. Cameras clicked; a smiling governor voiced words to which none but himself listened; a great floral horse-shoe was hung about the moist neck of the chestnut victor.

At last the horse was led away, and the little group scattered. A furlong from the stand the Colonel handed the reins to a groom and took from the neck of Richelieu III the horseshoe of flowers. Slowly he made his way across the infield, stood for a moment with lowered head, and then placed the symbol of victory upon a sodded mound.

I hurried over to the stables. What cared I for sixth and seventh races, now that the weary quest of my friend had come to its glorious end?

Two gentlemen were there before me—one a very short and very plump gentleman

by the name of Bloom and the other a tall and angular gentleman by the name of Colby. They were sitting upon upturned buckets and both wore the air of waiting—wrathfully waiting—for a third.

The Colonel and Ann approached; and, hurrying to them, I gripped their hands and placed my arms about their shoulders and uttered halting banalities.

"Ah, here he is!" interrupted the Colonel.

Turning, I saw Ab, his trim figure erect, a broad smile upon his lips.

A MOMENT Colonel Trevelyan looked down at him; then he took the boy's hands in his own and held them before him, palms upward. "There are times, when we must all," he began, in his halting fashion, "cleanse our hands." Pausing, he dropped the boy's, and placing an arm about his shoulders, gently patted him upon the back. "Yours are the kind, my boy, that stay clean."

Sober-eyed, Ab gazed down at his upturned palms, then into the eyes of the older man. "I think they *will*," he said. And he extended both of those hands to Ann; whereupon the Colonel and I turned away.

"Hey, you! Come here!" called a voice near by, and turning, we saw the squat Mr. Bloom and the elongated Mr. Colby awaiting the grinning approach of Ab.

"You're a bird!" growled Bloom.

"Want me to sing?" asked Ab. "I feel like it."

"Cut the comedy!" muttered Colby. "What kind of a deal you call this?"

"The Colonel calls it a hand-washing," said Ab.

"An' what about us, huh? If you think you can—"

"Here," interrupted the boy, handing Bloom a penciled memorandum.

"What's that?" demanded Colby.

"That's a record of bets I made, in your and Bloom's names, *on* Richelieu. Go cash 'em—and make it good-by when you go! You'll find you won plenty more than you lost."

The eyes of the bulbous Mr. Bloom and of the long Mr. Colby widened. "Say, come clean!" invited the latter. "Who bought you off? Syndicate?"

"No—trust," laughed Ab.

"Fine stuff! Fine stuff!" snarled Mr. Bloom. "All o' th' work an' plannin' we done. An' for what? A lemon!"

"That is sort of tough," admitted Ab; "but I did mine for—an apple," he added.



Six Bombs

A fascinating detective story by the able author of "Three Who Would Hang."

By SEVEN ANDERTON

Illustrated by Allen Moir Dean

A TALL, slender young man in a slouchy gray suit emerged from the reference library and moved across the busy news-room of the *Morning Review* toward the exit. He had the soft dark eyes of a dreamer, but the rest of his features were firmly masculine.

Johnny Knight, taciturn city editor of the *Review*, looked up as the youth was passing his desk. A smile flickered for a moment in Knight's eyes, but his face was grim as he beckoned to the youngster, who halted beside the desk.

"Lis'en, Pat," growled Johnny, "how many times must I tell you to stay away from here? Since you spoke your piece to the boss when he fired you, the sight of you is like a red rag to a bull. The fact that you're my brother won't keep him from throwing you out of this office bodily."

"I wish he'd try it," answered the youngster as a sudden cold glint appeared in his eyes. "Nothing would give me more pleasure than to be offered an excuse for punching Blake Morely on the jaw."

"You scrappy little devil!" snapped Johnny. "Go on and get out of here before the boss comes out of his den and sees you. I'm going to come over to your house tonight and have a talk with you. If you don't calm down and begin to make something of yourself, I'm going to wash my hands of you."

"That'll be tough," smiled the youth, "but I'll try to live through it. Thanks to Grandmother Knight, I sha'n't starve."

THE editor frowned blackly at his smiling brother. Young Patrick Knight had received the bulk of the estate of his grand-



Every eye turned toward the private office. "God!" cried Johnny Knight.
 "They've got the old man at last!"

mother, who had died some years before. A paragraph in the will had explained that she was endowing Pat because none of the rest of the family understood him.

"Grandmother may have loved you," growled Johnny, "but she did you a dirty trick when she fixed you so you don't need to work."

"Oh, but I do need to work," countered the youngster. "My very soul needs the stimulus of endeavor. That's what keeps me busy at my chosen work. That's why I came up here today—and took a chance of being bounced by my amiable brother and his unspeakable boss."

"I suppose you're still trying to be a detective?" sneered Johnny.

"Dear brother," said the youth, "I *am* a detective. It isn't my fault that those dumb clucks down at Headquarters have

failed to realize it. Captain Deihl is the only man down there who has brains enough to recognize ability when he sees it. I'm satisfied he'd give me a chance to work with him, but he seldom goes on a job in person. Deihl always sends out Joe Baldwin—and Baldwin doesn't love me as he should. He gives me the bum's rush every time I hurry around to the scene of a crime and offer my valuable services. That's why I came up here today. I've been back in the library getting the dope on some of the unsolved murders that have been committed in this town. I've decided to get busy and solve one of the cases that the gang down at Headquarters has given up as a bad job. That should make them sit up and take notice."

"That's what I call a goofy ambition," said the elder brother. "Where's the fun

or the glory in making a bunch of ivory-headed dicks sit up and take notice?"

Pat Knight's lips parted to reply, but the retort was never voiced. The crash of a terrific explosion suddenly stilled not only the youth's voice, but all the clamor and din of the busy news-room. The entire building trembled with the force of the blast. The click and clatter of typewriters and telegraph-instruments ceased. So did the buzz of voices and the sound of hurrying feet on the paper-littered floor. Every person in the room seemed frozen in place. In the startled silence every eye turned toward the door that led to the private office of Blake Morely, editor and publisher of the *Review*. That door had been blown open by the explosion, and thick, yellowish smoke was billowing through it.

"God!" cried Johnny Knight, leaping to his feet. "They've got the old man at last!"

Johnny's words shattered the silence and seemed to dispel the paralysis that had gripped the room. As the city editor dashed across the room to that open door, most of the staff flocked after him.

The smoke-filled private office was a wreck. On the floor near the huge flat-topped desk that stood in the center of the room lay the body of Blake Morely. The body was a ghastly sight. The office was littered with debris. Plastering from the ceiling and one wall was mixed with torn and scattered papers, books and ruined office fixtures. The body of the publisher was partly covered with plaster that had fallen from above.

AS the smoke cleared, Johnny Knight backed from the room and closed the door. Less than a half-hour had passed since Knight had been grumbling to Clyde Marshall, his assistant, because the day had not produced a story worth front-page space!

Standing with his back to the door he had closed on the scene of disaster, Johnny proceeded to display the qualities which had made him known as the best city editor west of New York.

"Get busy!" snapped Johnny. "Starling, phone the police. —Gaddis, grab 'Who's Who' and pound out a history of Morely's life—about two columns. —Marshall, you phone the composing-room to get set for an extra, and then get a photographer to take pictures of that office. —Benson, dig a good two-column cut of the boss, out

of the morgue. —Dinsmore, write a lead story, saying that the boss was killed by an explosion that wrecked his private office and was probably caused by a bomb or some sort of infernal machine. . . . Come to life, all of you! D'you want the opposition to beat us to the street with a story that happened in our own office?"

The staff came to life. In a moment the great news-room was in travail—an extra edition of the *Review*, announcing the violent death of its owner, was about to be born. Before the reporter assigned to call the police had established connection with Headquarters, two uniformed policemen came hurrying into the office. The explosion had shattered the windows of Morely's office, covering the sidewalk below with broken glass. A crowd was rapidly gathering before the tall building in which the *Review* was housed. The excited throng gazed open-mouthed at the shattered windows on the third floor.

Johnny Knight met the two policemen. "Morely is dead," the city editor informed the officers. "Explosion in his office. He was alone in there when it happened. Nobody else hurt. I have a man calling Headquarters now."

"Where's the office?" asked one of the officers. "Let's have a look."

As the city editor turned to lead the way, the reporter who had called the police came hurrying across the room.

"The Chief says nobody is to go into the room until Captain Deihl gets here," the reporter informed Knight.

"All right," said one of the officers. "We'll guard the door." And they took up their station before the closed portal.

The giant presses were spewing forth the extra that told of the publisher's sudden and violent demise before Captain of Detectives Fritz Deihl arrived on the scene. Deihl walked directly to the closed door and spoke to the officers on guard.

"Keep everybody out of here and the door closed," snapped the detective. "Wont need an audience."

"Beg pardon, Captain Deihl," said Patrick Knight's soft drawling voice at his shoulder, "but may I please watch your work? I'll keep out of the way and ask no questions while you are busy."

"How did you get here, Pat?" demanded the detective. "Thought you had quit the *Review*."

"You mean you know I was fired," smiled Pat. "I just wasn't cut out to be a

reporter. I'm a natural-born detective. Please let me in on this."

"Well, come along," growled Deihl. "But keep out of my way."

"Thank you," murmured young Knight, following the detective into the room.

FIFTEEN minutes passed before the detective and the youth emerged from the wrecked office. Pat Knight carried a pad on which he had scribbled several pages of notes. A reporter buttonholed Captain Deihl and began to question him.

Pat Knight thrust his notes into his pocket and crossed the room, to halt beside his brother's desk.

"Well, Johnny,"—the youth grinned,— "it looks as if I'm not going to have to work on a cold case, after all."

The editor leaned back in his chair and glowered at his smiling young brother.

"Aw, Pat," he growled, "why don't you cut out this fool business of being a detective? You could be a hell of a good reporter if you'd only try. It's in your blood. The Knights have all been good newspaper men. Why must you want to be a dick? I'll try to get you back on the *Review*, if you'll only promise to get down to work and forget this detective foolishness."

"Thanks, Johnny," laughed the youth, "but your offer doesn't tempt me. Because all the rest of the family was suckled on printer's ink, there's no reason that I must like the taste of it. You've got me dozens of good jobs—and I couldn't hold them."

"You could have," declared Johnny. "Every boss you ever had has admitted that you'd be a corking reporter, if you wouldn't get worked up over solving some mystery and forget that the paper was depending on you for a story."

"Oh, let's not argue about it," answered Pat. "I'm free, white and twenty-seven. I'm going to be a detective in spite of hell and high water. Why not be a good scout and help me along? Deihl has given me a break on this thing. I'm going to teach Headquarters some respect for my ability before this case is cleared up."

"I'll give up," said the editor, shaking his head. "I guess Grandmother Knight was right, at that. I certainly can't understand you. Go ahead and be a sleuth—but I still insist that you were cut out to be a reporter. What are you doing with all those notes in your pocket? That's a reporter's trick. I never saw a detective do it."

"You never saw a detective like me," laughed the youth. "Now, I want to ask you a question. What did you mean when you cried out that they had got the old man at last? Did you have anybody in particular in mind?"

"No," answered Johnny. "You know how the old man was. The town is full of people who would have enjoyed killing him. He had been riding this town with spurs for twenty-five years. Hardly a week went by but he got two or three threatening letters from enemies. That's all I meant."

"All right," nodded Pat. "Who was the last person in that room with Morely before the explosion?"

"One of the office boys," answered the editor. "The boy took in an armload of mail about ten minutes before the blast. My guess is that the infernal machine was in that mail."

THE ringing of Johnny's telephone halted his brother's reply. The editor answered the call and spat out a few sharp sentences. Then he turned back to the waiting youth.

"Judge Foster O'Hara has just been killed by an explosion in his private chambers at the courthouse!" he explained. "That was the police reporter who just called me."

"Holy Moses!" cried Pat. "So long, Johnny! I've got to be in on this. See you later." He started running in the direction of the exit.

"Get a story for me," Johnny called after him.

"I'm not a reporter," Pat shot back as the door closed behind him. . . .

At seven o'clock that evening Johnny Knight and his brother sat at a table in a little restaurant not far from the office of the *Review*. Pat had called Johnny on the telephone and made a dinner-date with him after viewing the scene of Judge O'Hara's death.

"In spite of all the trouble I had getting in on a murder-case in this town, Johnny," observed Pat, after the waiter had taken their orders, "I'm in on one at last—and it's a big one. Deihl acted as if he was going to bar me from the Judge's chambers, but I persuaded him."

"You say you got into O'Hara's office?" asked Johnny. "Was the Judge's body as badly messed up as Morely's?"

"Worse, if anything," answered the youth. "His private chamber was wrecked

as completely as Morely's office. By the way, Morely and Judge O'Hara were pretty close friends, weren't they?"

"Yes," nodded Johnny. "Associates in various business and political enterprises, I believe."

"The odor of some of those enterprises was not so delightful as it might have been, was it?" queried Pat.

"I suppose not," agreed Johnny. "Neither politics nor some sorts of modern business are noted for sweetness and purity. What's buzzing in your bonnet?"

"Something that may become an idea," smiled Pat. "I'm going to be in at the finish on this case, or my name isn't Pat Knight. And I've got to dig up an idea quick that will make Captain Deihl put me on the job with official recognition. Deihl was an intimate friend of both Morely and Judge O'Hara, wasn't he?"

"He was," answered the editor. "That's why he went on both cases in person, I suppose."

"Glad he did," observed the youth. "All his subordinates, particularly Joe Baldwin, have been as hard-boiled as sin about letting me have even a peek at anything."

The waiter came with their food and they changed the subject. It was half-past eight when they left the restaurant.

"I'm going to walk over to the office with you," said Pat. "Want to use a typewriter to put my notes on both of these cases into legible shape?"

"I ought to bar you from the office," said the editor. "If you want to be a reporter, what right have you to wear out the *Review's* chairs and typewriters?"

"Try barring me," laughed Pat, "and I'll refuse to be interviewed by your reporters when I'm a famous detective."

BACK in the news-room, Pat Knight made his way to a littered desk in one corner. The desk belonged to Matt Payne, hotel reporter, and the youth knew that Matt wouldn't be in off his beat for at least a couple of hours. He pulled the note-pad from his pocket and set to work at the task of typing the notes. When he had finished, he sat frowning in deep thought while the din and turmoil of the office surged about him unheeded.

Suddenly he folded the notes and thrust them into his pocket. He rose quickly and walked to his brother's desk. "I've got that idea to submit to Deihl," he murmured, bending close to Johnny's ear.

"I'm going over to have a talk with him now. See you later."

At detective headquarters Patrick Knight was informed that Captain Deihl had just left for his home. The youth went out, climbed into his roadster and drove to the Deihl residence. It was only a block from his own home in a pleasant residential district of the city, Pat having chosen to live in the house where his grandmother had spent the last years of her life. A light was shining from two windows in the front of the Deihl home when he stopped his car at the curb.

"Glad you're still up, Captain," muttered the youth to himself. "Unless I'm badly mistaken, I'll be an official investigator on this job before you go to bed."

He jumped out of the roadster and ran up the short walk leading to the veranda. He was in the act of ringing the doorbell when a terrific explosion rocked the house. The floor of the veranda seemed to jerk under his feet, and he grasped the door-casing to keep from falling. The light he had noticed upon his arrival had gone out, and there was the sound of glass falling on the veranda floor. Thick smoke was pouring from the broken windows.

As young Knight regained his footing and his wits, a woman's screams came from the interior of the house. Pat tried the door, but it was locked. The woman's terrified screams continued.

"Open the door, Mrs. Deihl," he called. "This is Pat Knight." Pat had been a close friend of the Deihls since boyhood, because of his admiration of the detective captain.

The screams continued. Evidently the woman had not heard the call. The youth raced back to his roadster and procured a flashlight from a door pocket. Then he sped back to the house and stepped through one of the shattered windows. The beam of his torch pierced the blue haze of smoke that still filled the room, and he ran the circle of light rapidly over the chamber. It was the third scene of the sort upon which Pat had looked in the past five hours!

THE room had evidently been the study and den of Captain Deihl. It was a sorry sight. The body of the detective lay torn and bleeding near the desk that stood across one corner. The explosion had blown everything off the desk and shattered its glass top.

After one hasty glance about the wrecked

room, Pat hurried toward the rear of the house from which direction the woman's screams were still sounding.

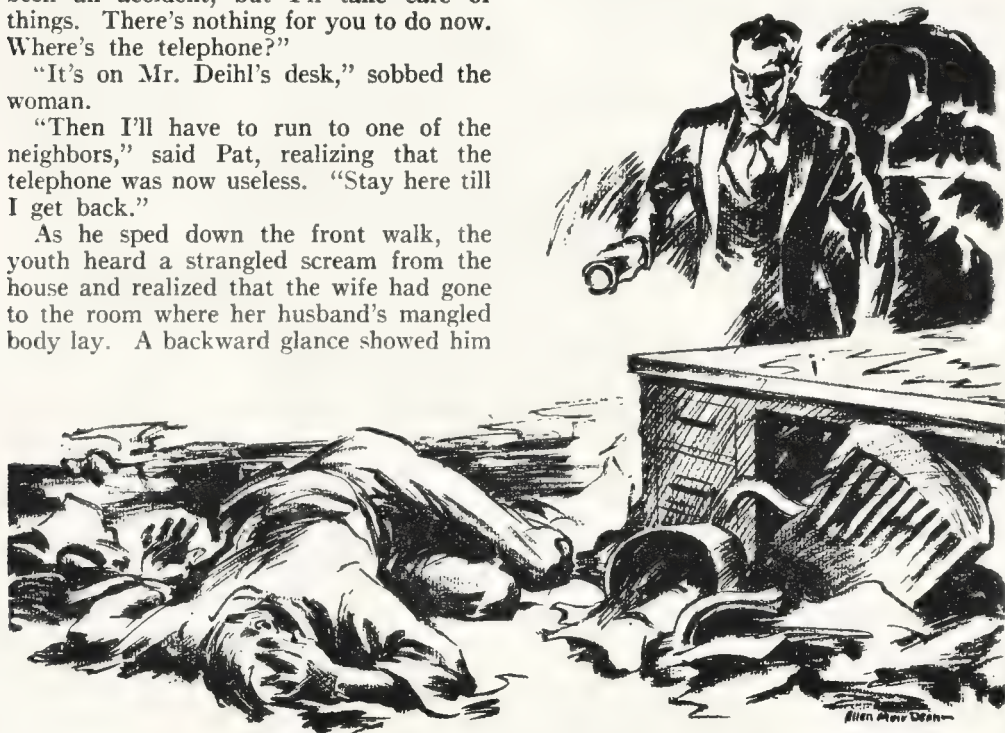
"You must be as brave as you can, Mrs. Deihl," said the youth to the frightened and trembling woman who stood in the doorway of a bedchamber. "There has been an accident, but I'll take care of things. There's nothing for you to do now. Where's the telephone?"

"It's on Mr. Deihl's desk," sobbed the woman.

"Then I'll have to run to one of the neighbors," said Pat, realizing that the telephone was now useless. "Stay here till I get back."

As he sped down the front walk, the youth heard a strangled scream from the house and realized that the wife had gone to the room where her husband's mangled body lay. A backward glance showed him

"I am Patrick Knight," he told the gathering crowd. "I have been working as a deputy with Captain Deihl in recent investigations. The police have been called. Until they arrive, nobody will enter the house, please. There are enough neighbors inside now."



It was the third scene of the sort upon which Pat had looked in the past five hours!

that the hall lights had been switched on, and the tragedy chamber was dimly lighted by them.

"Damn!" muttered Pat as he raced on toward the house next door, from every window of which lights now streamed.

The whole vicinity had been roused by the blast and by the screams of Mrs. Deihl. Neighbors were evidently preparing to rush to the scene of the trouble. A man in his slippers and undershirt opened the door at which Pat pounded.

"Call the police, please," begged Pat. "Tell them Captain Deihl has been murdered in his home next door." Then he turned and ran back to the Deihl home.

Neighbors were soon on the scene. Young Knight turned Mrs. Deihl over to sympathetic hands and took charge of the situation.

The man who had called the police and another neighbor volunteered to guard the entrance until the police arrived. Pat thanked them and went back into the house. With his electric torch in hand he stepped into the dismantled study. Standing still just inside of the door, he played the light slowly about the room, pausing now and then to jot down a note on the pad he dug from his coat pocket. He had just stepped from the room and pocketed his notes when the wail of a siren told that the police were arriving.

It was two o'clock the following afternoon when Patrick Knight seated himself on the corner of his brother's desk in the newsroom of the *Review*. The taciturn city editor lifted his eyes and scowled.

"Devil of a reporter you turned out to

be," declared Johnny. "First person on the scene when Deihl was blown to Kingdom Come. Called the police and never even gave me a buzz. Lost a glorious chance to scoop the opposition clean. Let down your brother to help a lot of cops!"

"Cut the howl, Johnny," Pat smiled. "I'm sorry, but I really couldn't give you a buzz in time to do you any good. The only telephone in reach had to be used to call the police. Then I had to hurry back to the house to look after Mrs. Deihl and inspect the scene before the police came to mess things up. Anyhow, you've got to realize that I've ceased to be a reporter. I'm going to become a detective—and nothing is going to stop me. That's why I'm here now. My career has struck a snag."

"What am I supposed to do?" inquired Knight. "Burst into tears?"

"No, old scout," replied Pat. "Control your emotions. Here's the story. Since Deihl was killed, Joe Baldwin is in the saddle at the detective bureau. He has ruled me out. I told him that I had been working on these cases with Deihl, but it didn't get me anything. He says he'll have no inexperienced kids fooling around where the force has to work."

"I'm glad of it," observed Johnny.

"Don't be nasty," pleaded the youngster. "I want my old job on the *Review* back, so I can go on being a detective."

"I won't give it to you—for two reasons," declared Knight. "First, I don't want you to go on being a detective. Second, since the boss was killed, I'm under orders to make no changes in the staff until his affairs are straightened up by his attorneys."

"You don't have to put me on the payroll," begged Pat. "I don't need money. You know that. Just assign me to go where I want to go as a member of the *Review* staff. That will get me by Baldwin's ban, if it comes to a show-down."

"You're crazy, Pat," declared Johnny.

"Oh, no, I'm not," the youth asserted. "I'm going to solve the mystery of these explosions and track down the murderer. If you'll do what I've asked you, I promise to let you in on the solution before I do the police."

"You seem to take it for granted that the police won't clean this up," the editor observed.

"Not before I do," answered Pat. "I know I'm a better detective than Baldwin or anybody who is working for him."

"What makes you think so?"

"Do you know what Baldwin's theory is?" Pat countered.

"He thinks Morely, Judge O'Hara and Deihl were killed by infernal machines that were sent in the mail," answered Johnny. "That's what he told our police reporters this morning."

"What gives him that idea?"

"Last person in Morely's office was a boy who took in an armload of mail," answered Knight. "Judge O'Hara had just dismissed court and retired to his private chambers to look over the afternoon mail, which had just come in. He was alone with his mail when the blast snuffed him out. Mrs. Deihl told police that there were several packages among Deihl's mail yesterday afternoon. She left them on his desk in his study. She was in bed when her husband came home. He had only been in his study a few minutes when the explosion came. He was probably looking over his mail. I'd say Baldwin's theory was pretty sound."

"Yes?" queried the youth. "Baldwin admits that Deihl's theory about the first two blasts was the same as his, doesn't he?"

"He does."

"Then think this over," suggested the boy. "If Deihl thought that his two friends Morely and O'Hara had been killed by infernal machines sent in their mail, why would he go home and monkey with any suspicious packages he found in his own mail? Wouldn't he be suspicious of any package?"

"Never thought of that," Johnny admitted, with a sharp look. "What—"

THE telephone on Knight's desk buzzed. He turned to answer the call.

"The devil you say!" cried Johnny after listening for a moment to an excited voice over the telephone. "Get over there, quick!"

The city editor snapped the receiver onto the hook and turned back to his brother.

"Franklin J. Masters has just been killed by an explosion in his office on the fifth floor of the Guardian Trust building," he announced. "I've sent Mark Denton over. You go too—and don't forget that you're a reporter. Phone me a story quick. Here's a reporter's badge in case you need it."

"Thanks, Johnny," cried Pat as he dropped the badge into his pocket and slid from the desk.

"Don't thank me—thank God," growled Johnny. "On your way, and get a story."

CHAPTER II

A CROWD at the entrance of the Guardian Trust building was being held back by the police when young Knight arrived. Officers were also guarding the elevators and stairways. Pat managed to gain the corridor of the fifth floor by showing the badge Johnny had given him and smiling his contagious smile at the officers. There, with several other reporters, he found himself halted by two burly policemen stationed before a door from which the glass panel had been broken. The corridor was littered with bits of the glass on which had been lettered the name of Franklin J. Masters, one of the city's most prominent attorneys. The officers would not permit the reporters even a look into the room.

"You can wait right there by the elevator," they were informed. "When Captain Baldwin comes out, you can talk to him."

Pat Knight stepped close to the side of Mark Denton, the *Review's* police reporter, who had arrived just ahead of him. An officer had come up the stairs carrying a huge square of cardboard and a hammer. He began to nail the cardboard over the opening in the door.

"Hello, Denton," whispered Pat. "I'm back on the *Review*. You stick and interview Baldwin. I've got an idea."

The police reporter nodded, and Pat slipped away toward the stairway. Ten minutes passed; then Baldwin emerged from the room in which the attorney had met death. The reporters met a gruff reception when they pounced upon the detective.

"Listen, you fellows," snapped Baldwin. "Masters is dead. He was alone in his private office reading his mail—it had been taken in by his secretary before she went to lunch. There were some packages in the mail, and one of them was probably an infernal machine. That's all I've got to tell any of you—and I don't want to be bothered. Nobody's going into that room. If you want to see the body, you'll have to wait until it is taken to the morgue. Then you must get the family's permission."

The detective pushed past the newspaper men and into the waiting elevator. The scribes hurried away to get in touch with their offices.

At three o'clock Johnny Knight was reading the final page of the story of Franklin Masters' death as it had been built up by a rewrite man from the facts telephoned by the police reporter. It wasn't a very complete or informative yarn, but it seemed the best that could be done under the circumstances. The city editor looked up as his young brother paused beside him.

"Where have you been sleeping?" demanded Knight as he handed the typed page to a boy who was waiting to rush it to the composing-room. "We'll be on the street in five minutes with the story. Did you get anything at all?"

"I've been in the room with the remains of Franklin Masters," Pat replied, taking a small folding camera from his pocket and laying it on the desk. "I've got six snapshots of the ruined office and the victim. The roll is still in the camera."

Knight grabbed the camera and yelled for a boy to rush it to the dark-room and tell the photographers to make wet prints of each film in a hurry. Then he whirled on the waiting youth.

"How the devil did you get into that office? Got anything to add to the story we already have up?"

"I don't know what's in your story," answered Pat, "but I've nothing to tell that the pictures won't tell fully as well as I could write it. I got into the office by going up to the sixth floor and slipping through the office of a friend who is located above Masters' office. I went down the fire-escape and into Masters' office through the broken windows."

"It was so simple that Baldwin evidently never thought it could be done. I had just time to take the pictures and make some notes when the coroner arrived, and I had to duck back up the fire-escape."

"Pat," cried Knight, "you are some reporter. We'll have the only pictures of the scene of the murder! Sure you've nothing in your notes to add to the story?"

"I'm a better detective than I am a reporter," chuckled the youngster. "Don't forget that. The reporter got the pictures for the *Review*. The notes were taken by a detective and are not for publication."

JOHNNY KNIGHT had barely seated himself at his desk the following afternoon when the telephone buzzed. It was the *Review's* police reporter calling.

"Your brother Pat's been pinched," an-

nounced the reporter. "He asked me to call you and tell you he wants to see you."

"Pat pinched!" cried Johnny. "What for? Where is he?"

"I don't know what for. Baldwin had him brought in. They haven't booked him yet. He's in a cell."

Johnny growled "Thanks!"—banged up the receiver and hurried from the office. Ten minutes later he was standing before Acting Captain of Detectives Baldwin's desk in that officer's private office.

"Sorry, Knight," refused Baldwin, "but you can't see him. I'm weary of that brother of yours. He's going to learn that he can't fool with me and get away with it. Deihl was too easy with him. I'm not Deihl. He knew I had issued orders that nobody, especially any reporter, was to go into Masters' office. He thought that was a smart stunt he pulled. He'll probably change his mind before long."

Johnny glared at the big red-faced detective. He didn't like the fellow, but he didn't care to antagonize him needlessly.

"What's Pat charged with?" demanded the editor.

"Investigation will hold him for the first twenty-four hours," answered Baldwin. "After that, if he don't promise to stop meddling, I'll have something else ready. He's going to keep his nose out of my business or stay in a cell where he'll have to behave."

"You can't get away with any such stunt," declared the editor. "Not where my brother Pat is concerned. You're forgetting that we have influential friends. Pat also has plenty of money—and he is entitled to see a lawyer. He can put up a million-dollar bond before night."

"Mebby so," growled the detective, "but I've got a few cards up my sleeve too. Don't forget that. He either agrees to keep out of my affairs, or he stays in jail. You can bet your pile on that."

"You're crazy," flared Johnny, his face flushing suddenly. "If I bet my pile, it will be the other way. Just to show you that you don't know what you're talking about, I'm going to see my brother. You can either give me permission, or I'll go get Paul Greer—and see him without it."

Paul Greer was the Knight family's attorney, a prominent and very able lawyer. Baldwin's red face grew redder as he listened to the editor's defiant speech.

"Hop to it!" snarled the detective. "See how far you get. I've spoken my piece."

BACK at his desk in the news-room of the *Review*, Johnny called Paul Greer on the telephone. The editor was madder than the traditional wet hen. He might personally disapprove of the behavior of his kid brother, but when a nit-wit outsider like Baldwin did it—that was a horse of another color!

Johnny closed a half-hour talk with the attorney, Greer, by asking that Greer call back by telephone as soon as he could arrange an interview between the brothers.

"Sorry, John," apologized the lawyer when he finally called back, after more than an hour had passed. "I can't get you in. They're hard-boiled about it. I've finally managed to get an interview for myself, but I can't take anybody with me. I'm going down to see the boy at once. Any message you wish to send?"

"Tell the kid that I'm with him one hundred per cent," answered Johnny. "How long will it take to get him out?"

"Can't say how long it will take to effect his release," answered Greer. "They seem to be sore about something, but I'll have no trouble arranging bond as soon as I can force them to fix it. I'll give the boy your message."

"Call me up after you've seen him," requested Johnny.

DARKNESS was just settling over the city when Greer walked into the news-room and hurried to Johnny Knight's desk.

"Well, I saw Pat," announced the lawyer. "I gave him your message. Have you time for a pow-wow?"

"Yes," answered Johnny. "Let's go and eat. I've had no dinner. Been waiting to hear from you. When does he get out?"

"Can't say, yet," frowned Greer. "They can hold him until noon tomorrow for investigation. Then they'll have to make their next move. After that, we'll see."

"Damn!" growled Johnny as he rose and took down his coat and hat.

Ten minutes later Greer and the editor were ordering dinner at a table in a quiet corner of a near-by restaurant.

"What was the message Pat sent?" asked Knight as the waiter moved away.

"He said to tell you not to get excited and do anything to make Baldwin any worse," said Greer.

"He couldn't be any worse," snorted Johnny. "I'd like to punch him in the eye—and kick him in the slats for good measure. What else did Pat say?"

"He said to tell you that he wasn't so bad off," smiled the attorney. "His cell, he said, was a nice quiet place in which to think. He wants you to get all the dope on the four men who have been killed by these explosions. He said to tell you to dig out all the data on them that could be found in your reference-room. As soon as you get that stuff together, I'm to take it over to the jail and see that Pat gets it. I'm also to take a volume of 'Who's Who'

makes quite a bundle. It was nine o'clock that night when Johnny Knight delivered the package to Greer.

"I'm putting my head in the fire by letting this stuff go out of the office," said the editor. "If anything should happen to it, the greater part of these things couldn't be replaced for love or money."

"I'll undertake to see that nothing happens to them over at the jail," answered Greer. "I'm blessed if I know what Pat



"I'm going to solve the mystery of these murders even if you find some other excuse to arrest me!"

and a bundle of notes that are in his desk at his home. He says he intends to be a lot nearer the solution of the mystery of these blasts before he sleeps tonight."

"I've a darned good notion not to send him that stuff," grumbled Knight. "Why don't the contrary devil get this detective stuff out of his noodle? One of the best reporters the *Review* or any other paper ever had—and he insists on chasing crooks and murderers!"

"He's a persistent lad," nodded Greer. "Said that if he had to do it, he could prove to Baldwin that he could do a better job of sleuthing while locked up in a cell than Baldwin could do at large."

"Well, almost anybody could show up that fathead," snorted Johnny. "Baldwin couldn't detect a bass drum in a sack of beans. I'll dig up the stuff Pat wants, as soon as I get back to the office."

THE clippings and other data kept on file by a big daily paper concerning four of the town's most prominent citizens

wants with all this stuff. I got what he wanted from his house—and I'd better be trotting over to the jail with it."

Greer departed, and Johnny turned to the aid of his worried assistant. The scowl never left his face until the paper was put to bed, and he left for home. . . .

Johnny Knight usually slept until noon, but he was in Paul Greer's office at ten o'clock the next morning. The attorney greeted him and pushed a box of cigars across the desk.

"Seen Pat this morning?" demanded Knight.

"Less than an hour ago," nodded Greer. "Baldwin hasn't yet exposed his next move—probably went until the last minute, which is twelve o'clock. Pat was busy digging through the stuff I took him last night. They turned the lights out on him at ten, he said, so he had to go to bed, but he got up at the crack of daylight and got busy. He's having his meals brought in. He said for me to tell you that he had been in worse places than jail."

"Any chance for me to see him yet?" asked the editor, viciously biting the end from a cigar.

"From the appearance of things, I'm afraid you'll have to wait till I get him released," answered Greer. "Baldwin is hard-boiled about granting you or anyone else permission to visit Pat. He was sore as a boil about having to let him have that stuff you sent. I've made Baldwin responsible for the safety of your property till it's returned to me."

Greer and Knight arrived at the jail at five minutes before twelve o'clock. The editor waited in a corridor, while the lawyer disappeared into the labyrinth of offices.

Knight spent another half-hour impatiently walking his beat in the corridor before Greer rejoined him. The attorney's face was dark.

"Well?" demanded Johnny.

"They've changed the charge," announced Greer. "Pat's now being held for impersonating an officer. They say he told the crowd which gathered after the explosion at Deihl's house that he was working for the detective bureau. They don't have to give him a hearing on the new charge until ten o'clock tomorrow morning, and I can't do anything until they have his hearing and fix his bond. Looks like he's in for another night."

"And I can't see him yet?"

"Guess not."

"You going to see him?"

"Right now."

"I'll wait for you out in the car."

IT was half-past one when Greer joined the editor in the latter's car which stood at the curb before the jail.

"Pat seems to be having a good time," said the lawyer in answer to the question in Johnny's eyes. "Says he's getting a line on the motive behind these killings. Seemed highly amused at the stories in the morning papers, saying that Baldwin hopes to make an arrest soon."

"Will you get him out tomorrow?" asked Knight.

"I'm not promising," answered Greer, frowning. "I saw Baldwin in conference with the district attorney as I came down the hall just now. You know Baldwin and the D. A. are of the same political complexion. I fancy they are birds of a feather in other ways. If Baldwin has the D. A. with him in this, there's no telling what they'll pull out of their bag of tricks yet.

It doesn't help matters any that Pat keeps rubbing Baldwin's hair the wrong way. He told me Baldwin offered to release him this morning if he'd agree to drop his notion of being a detective and keep out of this affair. Pat said he informed Baldwin that he was going to solve this mystery whether Baldwin released him or not."

"Pat would say something like that," nodded Knight gloomily. "Did he send any word to me?"

"Yes. You're to send him all the information you can get hold of concerning the Continental Holding Company of Chicago."

"What the devil does he want with that?"

"Search me; but he said you could find it in the reference-room and I'm to bring it back to him right away."

"All right," agreed Johnny. "We'll go get his dope for him, but if you don't get him out of that jail P. D. Q., I'm going to certain people in this town and stir up a muss that will jar Mr. Baldwin plenty."

AT three that afternoon Patrick Knight, seated on the narrow bunk in his cell, laid down a sheet of paper that had been holding his attention and lifted his voice in a call to the turnkey. A moment later the grim party who presided over that particular cell-block appeared at the barred door.

"Please," begged Pat, "tell Detective Baldwin that I must see him at once."

The turnkey nodded and moved away. Ten minutes later Baldwin, a smile on his florid face, loomed outside the door of young Knight's cell.

"Well, Knight," he rumbled, "made up your mind to agree to my terms?"

"Mr. Baldwin," said the youth, ignoring the detective's question, "I must see my lawyer, Mr. Greer, at once. He said that I was to have you call him in case it became urgent that I see him. Will you please phone him?"

A frown replaced the smirk on the burly detective's face. This was evidently not what he had been expecting to hear.

"All right," Baldwin grunted. "But you'd better make up your mind to promise to keep out of my affairs. If you'll do that, you can sleep at home tonight—and I'm tellin' you that you'll stay here until you promise, lawyer or no lawyer."

"Please call Mr. Greer for me," was Pat's answer.

When an hour had passed without Paul

Greer appearing, Pat again called the turnkey and asked him to find out whether the message had been delivered to the attorney. The turnkey departed and returned shortly.

"Mr. Baldwin has been calling your party," reported the turnkey, "but has been unable to locate him."

"Liar," muttered Pat to himself as he turned and began pacing the small cell, his fists tightly clenched. Presently he called again to the turnkey.

"Tell Baldwin I must see him again," implored the youth. "Tell him I said there is going to be another bomb murder unless something is done at once!"

"WHAT'S all this about another murder?" growled Baldwin, appearing at the cell door in response to the latest request of his prisoner.

"Mr. Hartwell!" cried Pat. "F. L. Hartwell, president of the Guardian Trust company. Find him at once. He's in grave danger! He'll be killed just as Morely and the others were, unless you find him and warn him quickly."

"What are you talking about?" demanded Baldwin.

"Don't stand there like a statue!" the young man exclaimed. "Do something! I tell you Hartwell's life is in danger. Go and warn him—tell him to keep some trustworthy person with him all the time, and to be very careful."

"You gone nutty?" snapped the detective. "Or do you know something you haven't told me?"

"I know so many things that I haven't told you," retorted the young prisoner, "that you'd be smarter than you are now if you knew half of them and nothing else. Why doesn't Paul Greer come? He'd have been here long ago if you'd called him. He'd know enough to do something!"

"Calm down, calm down!" growled Baldwin. "Such chatter aint going to get you any place with me. If you know anything about Hartwell or anybody else being in danger, you'd better begin to talk sense, if you want me to do anything about it."

"I tell you I know that the same man who killed Morely and Deihl and the others is planning to kill Hartwell in the same way. That's all you've time to listen to, if you want to save Hartwell."

Before Baldwin could reply, the turnkey stepped up to announce that Mr. Greer was in the attorneys' room to see Patrick Knight.

"Unlock the door," Baldwin directed the turnkey. "I'll take him down."

"You stringing me about this Hartwell stuff?" demanded the detective as they paused at the door of the little room where the attorneys are locked in with their clients during interviews.

"I'm going to tell Paul Greer just what I told you and then some more," answered Pat. "He and my brother John will probably be doing something about it while you are still trying to think."

The young man stepped into the room where the lawyer waited. Baldwin closed the door and watched while a turnkey shot the bolt. Then he walked down the corridor toward his office, scowling blackly.

"Did Baldwin call you?" asked Pat as he faced the attorney in the locked room.

"No," replied Greer. "Why?"

"I asked him to call you and tell you that I must see you quick," answered the youth. "That was about three o'clock. He said he had been trying to reach you by phone, but couldn't."

"He's a liar," declared Greer. "I've been in my office all afternoon. I just thought I'd stop and see if there was anything you wanted before I went home to dinner."

"Glad you did," the young man said. "The reason I asked you to bring me that data concerning the Continental Holding Company was that all four men killed by those explosions were stockholders in it. The company is a closed corporation, holding and owning the formulas and patents for several gasses and explosives invented or discovered during the war."

"There were only six stockholders, each holding equal amounts of the stock. Four of those stockholders are dead. The other two are F. L. Hartwell and Mayor Gallup. Mayor Gallup is spending his vacation hunting and fishing up on the Lake-of-the-Woods. Hartwell has been out of the city for some time on business for his bank."

"I saw by the morning papers that he came back to the city last night. Since I've been studying things in my cell, I've learned other things I haven't time to go into detail about now, that convince me that Hartwell is in grave danger of getting his the same way the others did. Please go right off and tell Johnny Knight what I've told you. Maybe Baldwin will get some men on the job. I've told him about what I've told you. But if he doesn't take action, you and Johnny must warn Hartwell. Tell him not to be alone at any time from

now on. All the others were killed when they were alone. Tell Johnny to try to find out from Hartwell whether the six stockholders of the Continental Company had a mutual enemy who might hate them all enough to undertake to murder the lot. Let me know what you find out as soon as possible, Mr. Greer."

CHAPTER III

IT was ten minutes past five when Greer parked his car before the entrance to the *Review*. He dashed up the two flights of stairs, burst into the editorial-rooms and beheld a scene of mad activity, the place in a turmoil of haste and industry.

"What's the fuss all about?" asked Greer, halting beside Johnny Knight's desk.

"F. L. Hartwell killed by an explosion in the library of his home," answered Johnny, looking up from the galley proof he was reading. "Happened fifteen minutes ago."

"My God!", cried Greer. "Then your brother was right—but we're too late."

"What do you mean—my brother was right?" demanded the editor, leaping to his feet.

"Let's get somewhere out of this fuss!" answered Greer. "Then I'll tell you all about it."

Knight led the way to a small room off the library and closed the door.

"Spit it out, man," cried Johnny as he faced the lawyer.

Rapidly, trying to control his excitement, Greer told of his latest interview with Patrick Knight. When the attorney had finished, the editor was furious. Johnny strode several times across the small room, his fists clenched and his eyes blazing.

"Come on!" he cried suddenly. "Baldwin is out at the Hartwell house. We're going out there. On the way I'll tell you what we are going to do when we get there."

It was a two-mile drive to the Hartwell home in an exclusive residential district. Editor and the lawyer arrived to find the scene of the latest bomb murder surrounded by a curious mob, held back by a cordon of police. They were informed that Acting Captain Baldwin had just left for his office.

"Back to Headquarters, quick," growled Johnny Knight.

The return trip was made with even more

speed. At a quarter past six Johnny Knight, with the attorney at his elbow, was pounding on the locked door of Baldwin's private office.

"Who's there?" called Baldwin's voice.

"Johnny Knight and Paul Greer," the editor shouted, "and we want to get in there quick."

The door opened. Baldwin stood frowning at his callers. Beyond his bulky figure Knight and Greer saw Patrick Knight sitting white-faced before Baldwin's flat-topped desk.

"Third-degree stuff, eh?" snarled Johnny, pushing past Baldwin into the room. "Come in, Greer, and shut the door. I've got a lot to say to this big hunk of fat."

"Johnny!" cried Pat, a glad light coming to his eyes.

"'Lo, Pat," nodded Johnny. Then he wheeled on Baldwin.

"Listen, you!" snapped the furious editor. "I want my brother turned loose—and I want it done damned quick. I don't want any back-talk. This game is played out. You've played horse around here, trying to keep from being shown how to be a detective, and let another man be murdered by somebody you should have been hunting while you were laying schemes to keep an innocent man in jail."

"If you don't turn Pat loose right now, I'm going back to my office and print the facts. I'll print a story that will stir up public sentiment in this town until you'll be ridden out of it on a rail. I'll do it if it's the last thing I ever do."

Patrick Knight had risen and moved close to his brother's side. The editor stood glaring at the big detective, white-hot anger blazing in his eyes.

"I'm leaving here right now," snapped Knight. "I'll either take my brother with me, or I'll leave him here with our attorney and I'll have a paper on the street within an hour carrying a story that will make you crawl into a hole and pull the hole in behind you. Which shall it be?"

"When you butted in," answered Baldwin, "I was just asking your brother how he knew that Mr. Hartwell was going to be killed. I intended to let him go after he had answered my questions."

"Let me talk, Johnny," put in Pat, laying his hand on his brother's arm. "I'll answer his questions. Then we'll go."

"All right," growled Knight, still glowering at Baldwin.

"I did not know Hartwell was going to

be killed, Baldwin," declared Pat. "I only knew that he was in grave danger."

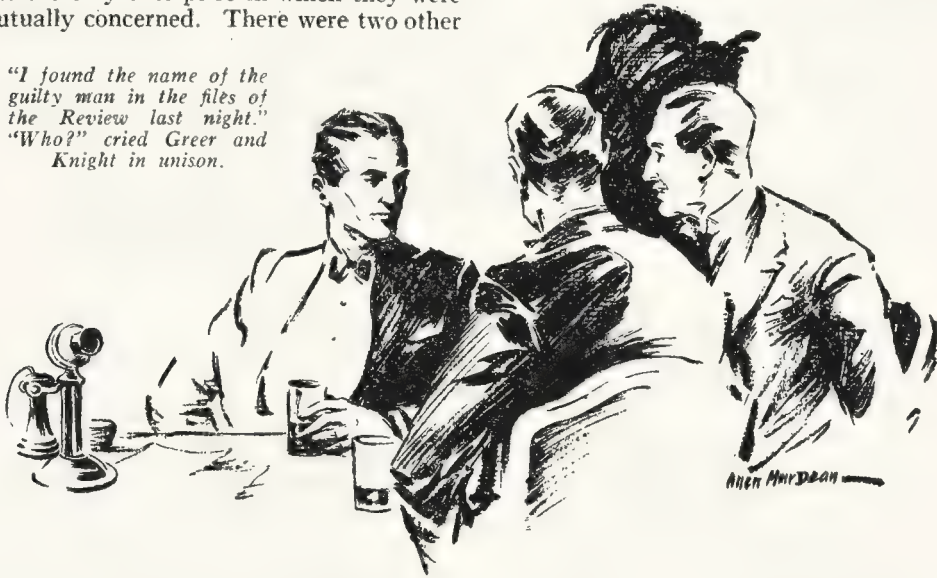
"Well, what made you think he was in danger?" snapped Baldwin.

"Because," Pat answered, "in studying the case I discovered that the first four men killed by these recent explosions were all stockholders in the Continental Holding Company. So far as I could learn, that was the only enterprise in which they were mutually concerned. There were two other

"And how!" Pat declared. "I'm going to find the person responsible for these explosions or die trying. Drive to Hartwell's house quick. We've lost too much time now. After I've had a look out there, perhaps I'll be ready to tell you two something that will interest you."

Young Knight spent a little more than

*"I found the name of the guilty man in the files of the Review last night."
"Who?" cried Greer and Knight in unison.*



stockholders. One of the remaining two was Hartwell. I saw in the morning paper that he had just come back to town after a long absence. That's why I feared for his safety and asked you to call Mr. Greer. Now I've told you all I had to act on. You're welcome to the information. I'm going to solve the mystery of these murders even if you find some other excuse to arrest me and keep me locked up."

"He'd better not," muttered Johnny Knight. "Let's get out of here."

BALDWIN made no move to interfere as the editor took his brother's arm and ushered the youth from the room. Greer followed them.

"Where do you want to go now, Pat?" asked Johnny when the three of them were in the car.

"Out to Hartwell's house," answered the youngster. "I must see the room where the explosion occurred—and I've got to have a look at the body."

"Are you bound to go on messing in this?" Johnny asked.

half an hour in the Hartwell house. He studied the room where the tragedy had occurred, and inspected the body, which still lay on the floor of the death-chamber, covered with a sheet. He asked a number of questions of Mrs. Hartwell and the servants, and jotted down numerous notes.

"Let's go to the *Review*," he said as he stepped into the car where Knight and Greer waited. "I want to look up some things in the files."

"I should have been back there long ago," said Knight as the car started. "Marshall will think I have turned the city desk over to him completely."

"And I've had no dinner yet," said Greer. "Drop me at Henry's."

"After I've dug some stuff out of the files," Pat informed them, "I'm going out home and get a good night's rest. I want to see both of you out at the house at ten o'clock tomorrow morning. Is it a date?"

Both men assented. . . .

As soon as the door of his private office had closed behind Patrick Knight and

his rescuers, Acting Captain Baldwin strode to his desk and pressed a button. Presently he was in conference with three of his men. The conference lasted for half an hour; then a secretary entered the room and laid a bundle of papers before Baldwin. The other detectives left the room, and Baldwin turned his attention to the papers. After some time spent in poring with knitted brows over the printed, typed and written pages, he gave a low whistle, swept the papers into a drawer of the desk and again pressed the button.

"Listen, you fellows," said Baldwin, when the three detectives were again in the room. "I'm almost to the bottom of these bomb killings. It's big. Big money behind it. Now—"

THE acting captain and his three men emerged from the private office at ten o'clock and dispersed quickly on separate errands. Mark Denton, police reporter for the *Review*, wished that he also could disperse in order to keep an eye on all of them. Denton had been hoeing a tough row since the clash between his boss and Baldwin. He had been decidedly unpopular around Headquarters, but it was all in the day's work with Mark. He proceeded to put in an extremely busy hour following the breaking up of the conference in Baldwin's office. Despite the odds against which he worked, he gathered data which sent him hurrying back to his office shortly before midnight for a conference with Johnny Knight. He had been instructed not to trust the telephone after the break between Johnny Knight and Baldwin.

When the elder Knight arrived at his brother's home at ten o'clock next morning, Paul Greer was already there.

"Here's news for you, Pat," said Johnny. "Baldwin and three of his men have left for the Lake-of-the-Woods. They went last night."

"On the trail of Mayor Gallup, I suppose?" inquired Pat.

"Yes."

"I expected that," nodded the youth. "After what I told him last night, he evidently checked up on the Continental Holding Company. It probably dawned upon him that Mayor Gallup may be able to tell him the name of the person responsible for these other deaths. He went after the Mayor in a hurry, in order to get ahead of me. Well, let him go. I doubt if he finds the Mayor. You know that when Gallup

left, he gave no definite destination—said he intended to have a month of absolute rest, in a spot where even newspaper men and Uncle Sam's mail could not find him. Even if Baldwin finds him, he'll learn nothing I don't know already. I found the name of the guilty man in the files of the *Review* last night."

"Who?" cried Greer and Knight in unison.

"His name is Eckhel—Ferenc Eckhel. He was sentenced to twenty years in the Federal prison at Atlanta in 1918. He is a Hungarian and was sentenced under the espionage act. I have discovered that he is also a genius with chemicals and the inventor of an explosive known as Glodite, the patents and formula of which are owned by the Continental Holding Company. At the time he was sentenced, he claimed that his sentence was a conspiracy to rob him of the proceeds from his powerful explosive. He went to prison threatening a terrible death to all the men who had robbed him. The Continental concern, you may remember, claimed their explosive had been invented by a man named Garvin months before Eckhel appeared on the scene. They alleged that his suit was an attempt at extortion, and he was arrested as a spy shortly after he filed it."

"Where did you get all that information?" demanded Johnny.

"Out of the files of the *Review*," answered Pat. "The criminologists have not yet awakened to the value of newspaper files. They are the memory of the city. Individual human memories are short. People forget, but the newspaper in the file remains with its record of the city's tragedies and comedies, hopes and ambitions, of the day it was printed. You can learn a lot from a back number of a newspaper. That's where I found what Baldwin is taking a long, tiresome journey to learn."

"Huh," grunted the editor. "Go on!"

"I've learned that Eckhel was released from Atlanta five months ago," continued the youngster. "I'll stake my reputation as a detective that he is our murderer. I'll bet Mayor Gallup will say the same thing, if Baldwin finds him."

"And I'll bet you're right," cried Greer. "That bunch probably did rob this Eckhel and then railroaded him to Atlanta to shut him up. I can't help it if they are dead. I've never been able to see why a scoundrel should become a saint by the simple expedient of dying. When a live rascal dies,

he's just a dead rascal, far as I'm concerned. When that gang was alive, I wouldn't have touched any of their legal business with a ten-foot pole. This Eckhel probably had plenty of reason for taking the law in his own hands."

"Here's something else," put in Johnny. "If all Baldwin went up north for was to learn who, if anybody, Mayor Gallup suspects of these killings, why did Baldwin take an open warrant for Gallup's arrest?"

"What?" cried Greer.

"Did Baldwin do that?" demanded Pat.

"He did, unless Mark Denton has been lying to me," declared Johnny Knight. "And I don't see any reason to doubt Mark. Just the same, I can't see why Baldwin would arrest the Mayor for the murder of five men who were killed while he was hundreds of miles from the city."

PAT KNIGHT suddenly lay back in his chair and burst into a fit of laughter.

"Perhaps you can't see it, but I can," said Pat. "In reading over the by-laws of the Continental Holding Company, Baldwin naturally came upon a clause which provides that no one of the stockholders can sell his shares in the concern to any but another of the charter members or to the company. In the event of the death of a stockholder, his shares revert to the other stockholders in equal lots. Only the last survivor can dispose of the property to outsiders.

"Naturally, Mayor Gallup is now the last survivor, and is several millions richer by the death of the others. When that fact dawned upon Baldwin, what did he do but jump to the conclusion that Gallup is the murderer? You see, Baldwin still insists that these deaths were caused by infernal machines sent to the victims by mail. Ergo, the Mayor took a trip out of the city for the express purpose of sending infernal machines. Oh, I can see Baldwin's reasoning perfectly. Pardon me if I have another laugh. It's too funny."

"Then you still don't think the explosions were caused by bombs sent in the mails?" asked Johnny.

"I know they weren't," declared the youth. "The results were too perfect. If bombs had been sent through the mail, there must have been somebody else beside the intended victim hurt in at least one of the explosions. Then too, it is contrary to the law of averages that five infernal machines sent through the mail should get

their man in every instance. To make it more certain that there is nothing to Baldwin's theory, no mail whatever was delivered to the Hartwell home yesterday. There were no packages of any kind in the library when Hartwell went into the room to read for a couple of hours before dinner. Also, no fragments of a mechanism that might have set off a bomb have been found in the wreckage at the scene of any of the murders. Our friend Eckhel has not been using the mails to carry death to his victims. He has been diabolically certain of his results."

"There's something to that," nodded Johnny. "Still, I'm thinking about the Mayor and the warrant. Could it be possible that Gallup could be back of the snuffing out of these others? Men do weird things for millions."

"Don't be silly," retorted Pat. "Mayor Gallup is an extremely wealthy man, outside of his holdings in the Continental concern. His wife has more than a million in her own right. Baldwin is daffy if he thinks for a minute that the Mayor is guilty. Gallup is a marked man just as the others were, but I don't think he is in any danger until he returns to the city.

"Baldwin took an open warrant, you say. He probably isn't any too certain and has things fixed so he can serve the warrant or not, after he has located the Mayor and talked with him. If he doesn't serve it, he will have all trace of its issuance done away with."

"I'm sold on Pat's idea about this chemist, Eckhel," spoke up Greer. "The very by-laws of the holding company point to the fact that there is something crooked in the woods."

"Well, that's all I had to tell you fellows today, anyhow," said Pat. "I'm getting warm on some more things. It isn't going to be long until I'll be able to tell you where to put your hands on Ferenc Eckhel, unless I'm mistaken. But I'm going to need some help for the next few days. Will you loan me Mark Denton, Johnny?"

"What do you want of Denton?" demanded the editor. "I need him on the police beat."

"I want him because he knows this town so well and is so well known in it. I want him to gather some information for me that no one else can gather so quickly. If you'll let me have him for the next few days, I'll promise you a clean scoop for the *Review* on the capture of this killer."

"All right," agreed Johnny, after a moment of study. "I'll put somebody else on his beat and turn him over to you on those conditions. When do you want him?"

"Tell him to meet me at Henry's for lunch at one o'clock," answered Pat. "Now you fellows run along. I've a lot of things to do. I'll be seeing you later."

DURING the next three days Patrick Knight was a very busy young man. Aided by the police reporter who had been assigned to his service by Johnny, Pat filled every hour of wakefulness to the brim.

The bomb-murder story continued to dwarf everything else on the front pages of the papers. The town was wrought up to fever heat. All sorts of theories were broadcast and conjectures galore were made concerning the fiend responsible for the explosions. Most people adhered to Baldwin's theory of infernal machines in the mail. This, coupled with a rumor that the murderer was a maniac with a grudge at all wealthy men, caused the wealthy citizens to be extremely cautious about all packages delivered to their homes or offices.

Postal-clerks and mail-carriers were on edge. Many a harmless package of one sort and another was taken to the police station for investigation or doused into a pail of water and its contents ruined before the one to whom it was addressed would venture to open it.

The papers learned of Baldwin's departure from the city with his aides. This gave rise to a story that the acting captain of detectives was on the trail of the murderer who had been mailing the bombs from another town.

"For Pete's sake," young Knight told his three trusted colleagues, "don't let anything about this Continental Holding Company angle get out! It might blow up my scheme for catching this killer."

Three days after his midnight departure, Baldwin returned to the city. He returned without his three aides. He gave out to the papers that he was now certain of the identity of the sender of the bombs and expected to have him under arrest shortly.

THE morning after Baldwin's return, Pat Knight held a conference in his library with his brother, Greer, and Mark Denton.

"Fellows," said Pat, "now that Baldwin is back we've got to work fast before he gums things up and makes it harder for us to trap Ferenc Eckhel. I've taken the

data gathered with Mark's help in the last few days and pieced it together with what I already had—and the puzzle is almost solved. There remains only to grab Eckhel in the act of attempting his next and final murder."

"Sounds simple," remarked Johnny Knight, "but I must confess I'm completely in the dark."

"I'm about to enlighten you," asserted Pat. "You are the person who poked fun at me for taking notes at the scene of the murders. A study of those notes collectively caused me to notice several things that have evidently escaped the attention of everyone else, as did the holding-company angle. For instance, in each case the left hand of the blast victim was blown completely, or almost completely, to bits. The right hand was not marked at all in two cases and only slightly damaged in the others. What does that indicate?"

"That the left hand was closer to the bomb than the right!" cried Johnny, a sudden light coming to his eyes. "Perhaps that the left hand was holding whatever it was that exploded."

"See the value of my notes," nodded Pat. "Now we have five men all killed by something that they were holding in their left hand. All of the men who were killed were right-handed except Judge O'Hara. He was left-handed. Now, what is it that a man always grasps with his left hand, regardless of whether he is right- or left-handed?"

There was silence while both Knight and Greer pondered. The police reporter, a grin on his face, caught young Knight's eye.

"I'll give up," said Greer, finally.

"Me too," declared Johnny.

"Before I tell you," smiled Pat, "please call up Headquarters and see if Baldwin is there. If he is, I'll talk to him. The telephone is on that table beside you, Johnny."

KNIGHT picked up the telephone and gave the operator the number of police headquarters.

"What have you in your left hand now?" asked Pat.

"Well, by thunder!" muttered Johnny, staring in astonishment at the telephone receiver.

"Hang it up," laughed young Knight. "I don't want Baldwin yet."

The editor replaced the receiver on the hook and sat looking in a puzzled manner at his young brother. Greer went through



"Ferenc Eckhel?" Johnny gripped the phone. "Yes," said the voice. "Now I'm going to kill you!"

the motions of picking up a telephone and then nodded his head. He grinned sheepishly as he caught Pat's eye.

"Tell 'em the rest of it, Pat," chuckled Denton.

"If you'll look at my notes," went on Pat, "you'll see that the left side of the head of each victim was terribly mutilated while there were few or no marks on the right side. Also that in each of the murder chambers I found a telephone with the receiver completely gone. In one case the other part of the instrument was broken, evidently by falling to the floor. In the other cases nothing was broken but the completely demolished receiver. The answer is that each victim was killed while talking over the telephone; killed by some powerful explosive concealed in the receiver which he was holding to his ear with his left hand!"

"By thunder!" cried Johnny. "It looks as if you've got it. But how could a bomb small enough to be concealed in a telephone receiver do the damage that was done by each of these explosions? How could it be timed to explode while the person—"

"One question at a time," interrupted Pat. "I believe that this Glodite which Eckhel claims to have invented—probably did invent—is credited with being the most powerful explosive known. It was used in bombs in the war, but was found unfit for artillery use because it could not be used in a gun after the weapon became heated

from firing. Perhaps the bombs in those telephones were made of Glodite. Perhaps the chemist who discovered Glodite has evolved an even more powerful and destructive explosive.

"As to the timing of the explosions, I have no idea how that was done. I hope to learn. I told you this killer had laid his plans to be executed with diabolical certainty. You'll admit the thing was perfect. He probably called the man he intended to kill on the telephone and talked to him—made certain that he had the man he wanted holding the bomb against his head where it was certain to be deadly. Then he exploded the bomb. How it was done, we have yet to learn. But you will find the work of a genius behind this."

"A genius embittered and perverted by the injustices heaped upon him by his fellow-men," nodded Greer.

"Now," continued young Knight, "we will go ahead working on the theory that I am correct, thus far. I have had Mark check up on the telephone situation for me. We did not learn all that I would have liked to, but we learned enough to convince me that the man who called each of the slain men to their death, talked from a public booth not far from the place where his victim was to answer the call. Probably he left the booth and mingled with the crowd that gathered at the scene of the disaster. Perhaps he even gloated over the mangled remains. It stands to reason that

the method that was successful in the first five instances will be used again when the fiend attempts the life of his sixth victim, Mayor Gallup. Does it not?"

"Sounds reasonable," assented Johnny.

"Right," muttered Greer.

"Since Gallup is to all appearances the last on the list marked for death by our killer," went on the young detective, "we must not only prevent the Mayor's murder, but catch our fiend when the attempt is made. Otherwise Professor Eckhel may fade out of the picture and be lost to us forever."

"Yes," nodded Greer. "As I see it, unless you catch the man in the act of attempting the last murder, you haven't a chance to convict him even if he were caught later on."

"That's about it," agreed Pat. "The situation now boils down to this. We have a killer at large, waiting to complete his revenge by killing Mayor Gallup. The attempt will probably be made as soon as the Mayor returns to the city. With Mark Denton's help, I have evolved a plan that I believe will save the life of the Mayor and at the same time enable us to catch our murderer red-handed. It becomes a case of find the Mayor for me and I'll find the murderer for you."

"Baldwin must have found the Mayor," observed Johnny.

"That's what makes it tough," smiled Pat. "Anyhow, I'll have a try at that source of information first."

The youth rose, went to the telephone and called detective headquarters.

"Captain Baldwin?" he inquired. "This is Pat Knight."

"Yes." The tone was not cordial.

"Would you mind telling me where I could get in touch with Mayor Gallup?"

"How should I know anything about Gallup?" countered the detective gruffly.

"How would you like to know where to find Ferenc Eckhel?" purred Pat.

"Who?" Baldwin's voice betrayed his surprise.

"Professor Ferenc Eckhel, the man responsible for all the recent bomb murders," answered Pat, very slowly and distinctly. "Where is Mayor Gallup?" he added.

The detective's answer was a grunt. Evidently he was not certain what to say next.

"Will you see me if I come right down to your office?" inquired the youth. "Perhaps we might trade information."

"Come ahead," growled Baldwin.

"Are you going to see that—" began Johnny.

"I am," nodded Pat. "I'll not be gone long. I want you fellows to wait right here until I return. We may have a busy afternoon. If I am successful in locating the Mayor, we'll begin laying our trap for Eckhel. If Baldwin holds out on me, we'll have to get busy and find the Mayor by some other means."

"That fathead may lock you up on some fool charge or other," demurred Johnny. "You'd better take me down with you."

"You stay right here," insisted Pat. "I hardly think Baldwin will try locking me up again, but if I'm not back in an hour you can come down and see what's wrong."

THERE were still ten minutes left of the hour when young Knight returned to the impatient trio.

"Well?" demanded Johnny.

"In dulcet, well-modulated tones, the gentleman invited me to go to hell," said Pat. "I offered to produce Eckhel in short order if he would allow me to see Mayor Gallup. He offered to tell me where the Mayor was as soon as Eckhel was under arrest, if I would tell him where to find Eckhel. That was as far as we got, but I did learn one thing. Baldwin found the Mayor and has him hid out under guard of the three detectives who went with him on the search. We've got to find the Mayor to bait our trap with. Get your thinking-caps on."

"Maybe we could locate him through his wife," suggested Denton.

"If you were a society reporter instead of a police scribe," answered Pat, "you'd know that his wife is in Europe."

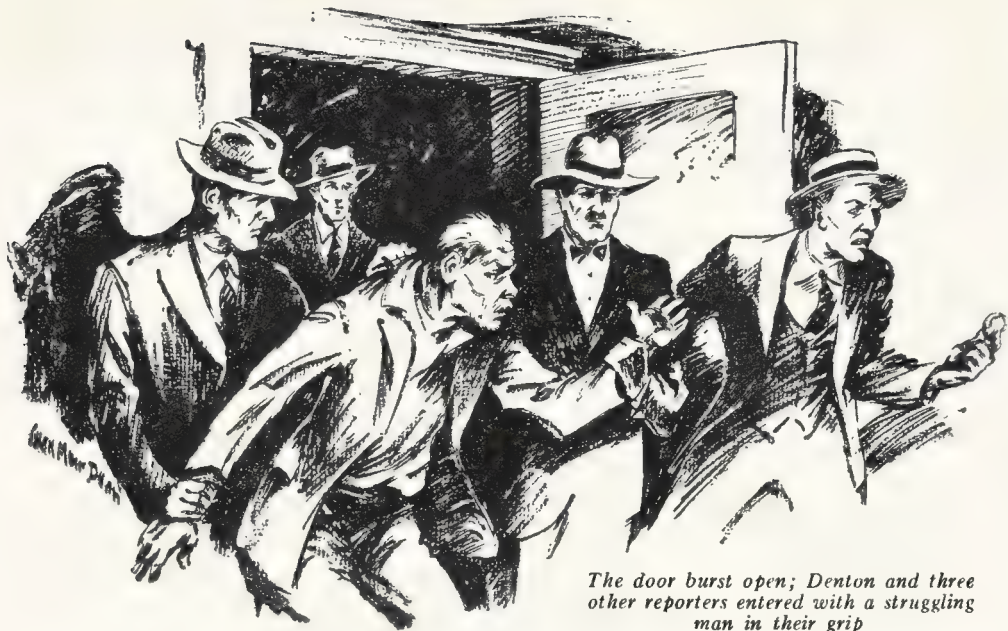
Silence fell; nobody offered any suggestion. Then young Knight broke the silence with a sudden cry.

"Perhaps we can get along without the Mayor," he announced. "Listen!"

For ten minutes the trio of listeners hung on the details of a plan the youth laid before them. When Pat had finished, all eyes were fixed expectantly on Johnny Knight.

"All right," grunted the editor after a brief silence. "I'll do it. I'm getting used to risking a good job to help you be an unsalaried detective. Anyhow, you've got me hopped up over this thing. If I manage the story, can you manage the rest?"

"Don't worry about that," Pat assured him. "You know that I have known both



The door burst open; Denton and three other reporters entered with a struggling man in their grip

the Mayor and Mrs. Gallup for years. We have been neighbors for ever so long. We're very good friends. I also know the servants who are in charge of their home during their absence. Mark and I will take care of arrangements at the Mayor's house this afternoon. You print your story in the morning—and we'll have our murderer captured before tomorrow night."

"I hope so," observed Johnny.

"I shall spend the night at the Mayor's home," went on Pat. "I will be up early and the rest of you must be there not later than six o'clock. Don't come in a bunch. Now let's get busy."

CHAPTER IV

EARLY next morning, young Knight, his brother John, and Paul Greer sat in an upstairs room in the home of Mayor Gallup. Excitement shone in their eyes.

"It won't be long now," said Pat. "Your story in this morning's paper is perfect, Johnny. How I'd like to see Baldwin's face when he reads it! He'll have a fit when he reads that Mayor Gallup returned to the city late last night and will spend today opening up his home before leaving for New York tomorrow to meet his wife who is returning from Europe. I wonder where Baldwin has the Mayor hidden, anyhow."

"He may have him in jail," said Greer, smiling.

"If this doesn't work out, there'll be plenty of hell to pay," observed Johnny Knight.

"Don't worry," his brother assured him. "It's going to work perfectly. I have the servants coached until they are letter-perfect. This telephone here on the stand is an extension that Mark Denton connected up yesterday. We took it out of my home. Mark and the other three fellows are waiting at my house and Mark has it fixed so that he will be notified by the operator whenever the call we are expecting here comes. The operator will tell Mark where the call is coming from. Then Mark and the other guys will jump in the car and be waiting for our man whenever he comes out of the booth. All we have to do is stall for time until the fellows are surely on the job. There are only three public booths out in this neighborhood. The gang can easily get to any one of them in five minutes from my house."

"What's the idea of this extra extension?" asked Johnny.

"Safety—and other things," answered Pat. "In the other instances, when there were extension phones in the home of the victim, he was killed in his office. Deihl and Hartwell, who were killed in their homes, had no extension phones in their houses. Neither were there any extension phones in this house until Mark installed this one."

"I learned from Martha, the housekeeper, yesterday, that a man from the telephone

company was here last week to check over the wiring. Mark learned from the telephone company that no man has been to this house for months. That makes it certain that the telephone downstairs in the library has been made into a death instrument. We will do our talking over this one. I had the servants move everything out of the library yesterday and the room is locked. The explosion down there will do no damage that cannot be repaired by the builder."

"You thought of everything, didn't you?" asked Johnny.

"I hope so," nodded Pat. "I tried to. A good detective must."

"If this things works out," observed Greer, "*Sherlock Holmes* loses a follower. I shall transfer my allegiance to you."

"And if it does not work out," growled Johnny, "there's going to be a murder you haven't figured on! When do you expect this gent to call up?"

"As soon as he reads the *Review*," answered Pat. "I'll bet he's reading the papers closely—and he can't possibly miss your story about the Mayor's return. You gave it such a nice prominent place with the Mayor's picture to call attention to it. I'm counting on Eckhel to decide that he'd better commit his final murder at once since the Mayor is to be in town but one day. He'll see no reason for delaying until the Mayor's return from New York, some weeks hence."

"Well, I hope he makes it snappy," muttered Johnny. "My nerves are in no condition to be dallied with."

NEVERTHELESS they waited until a quarter of nine before the telephone rang. All three gave nervous starts. Young Knight rose and picked up the instrument.

"Hello," he answered.

"Hello," inquired a husky voice with a slight accent. "Is this Mayor Gallup's home?"

"Yes."

"Is Mr. Gallup there?"

"Yes. Who is calling?"

"Mr. John Gehring," answered the voice.

"I'll call the Mayor," said Pat, putting down the instrument. His eyes were shining with excitement as he turned toward the waiting men.

"It's him!" Pat whispered. "He said it was John Gehring, but I know John Gehring's voice. Don't make a sound. We must give Mark and his boys time enough."

The youth fell silent and watched his wrist-watch tick off three minutes. Then he turned again to the telephone.

"Hello," he inquired. "Mr. Gehring?"

"Yes," answered the voice.

"Hold the wire, please. Mr. Gallup will be here in a couple of minutes."

"All right."

Again Pat fixed his eyes on his wrist-watch. Three more minutes ticked away. Pat lifted his eyes to Johnny's.

"Answer him," the youth whispered.

"Hello," said Johnny Knight, speaking gruffly into the mouthpiece.

"Hello," answered the other voice. "Mr. Gallup?"

"Yes."

"This is Ferenc Eckhel."

"Ferenc Eckhel?" Johnny's knuckles turned white as he gripped the phone.

"Yes, Ferenc Eckhel," said the voice; "the man you robbed and sent to prison ten years ago. Now I'm going to kill you!"

THE voice ceased speaking and Johnny heard a whirring sound in the receiver. The whirr changed to a drone which became a whine and grew higher and higher in pitch until it was a metallic screech. Then the house suddenly trembled as the crash of an explosion sounded from the lower part of the house. Patrick Knight uttered a low cry. Johnny replaced the receiver and set down the phone. A moment later all three were racing down the stairway. They could hear the excited cries of the two servants as they descended.

The library was filled with thick, pungent smoke. The window-panes were nearly all broken. The telephone lay on the floor of the bare room amid plastering that had been shattered down by the blast. The receiver of the instrument was not to be found.

"Come on!" cried young Knight, after the brief inspection of the wrecked library had been made. "Follow me out the back way before neighbors and the police get here. My car is parked in the alley. I've told the servants what to say. It's only three blocks to my house. Mark and the boys will bring Eckhel there."

"If they got him," said Johnny sourly.

Upon their arrival at young Knight's home the negro servant informed them that the gentlemen had received a telephone call and departed hurriedly some ten minutes before. While he was speaking, the front door burst open, and Denton and three

other reporters from the *Review* entered with a struggling man in their grip.

"Got him!" cried Mark. "Got to the drug-store just a minute before he came out of the booth. He had this little jigger in his hand and tried to throw it away." Mark held up an object that looked like a dollar watch, except that it had no hands and there were no numerals on the face.

The prisoner had grown quiet, seeming to suddenly realize the uselessness of his efforts. He was an old man, or rather a prematurely aged man. His hair was almost white. His face was covered with a grizzled beard of two or three weeks. His bent body seemed frail.

Johnny Knight advanced to a position in front of the captive.

"Hello, Eckhel," said the editor. "I'm the man to whom you talked a few minutes ago. You see, you didn't kill me."

The man shook his head slowly. "No," he said. "Well, you have caught me, but I have sent five of those lying thieves to hell for what they did to me. Take me to jail. I won't be there long. I've been sentenced by a higher court. My lungs are almost gone. They'll have to try me quick if they want the fun of sentencing me."

"Before we take you to jail," said Johnny, "will you tell us how you did these things? It was a clever trick, I admit."

"All I did was put a specially constructed bomb into the receiver of the telephone," answered the prisoner. "The explosive was an improved form of the one those thieves cheated me out of. It was set off by a spark produced from a tiny coil by the principle of radio. The spark was produced by vibrations set up by a certain high-pitched sound. The sound was made by the instrument this man showed you a moment ago. Once I had loaded my telephone by posing as a telephone-company employe, all I had to do was get the man whom I wished to kill to answer the telephone. Then I held my sound-producer to the transmitter at my end of the wire and started it working. The explosion followed."

"Cute little trick," muttered Johnny. "Greer, you and the other boys help Pat take him down and turn him over to the police. I'm taking Mark and streaking for the office to get out an extra. Give us a half hour's start, will you, Pat?"

"I guess I'm that much of a reporter," smiled the youth.

CAPTAIN BALDWIN slept late. He started for his office at nine o'clock. He bought a *Review* of a boy at the door of the municipal building and stood thunderstruck as he saw the story of the Mayor's return to the city. For a moment he almost believed it. Then he swore and stormed into the building. Bawling an order for his assistant to come to him, he headed for his private office.

"Beg pardon, Captain," called the desk sergeant, "but there has just been a mysterious explosion at the home of Mayor Gallup."

"What?" cried Baldwin.

"Explosion in the library at the Mayor's home," repeated the desk sergeant. "Dowling and Morgan have been out there. They're on their way in now."

"Send 'em to my office as soon as they get here," barked Baldwin, heading for that sanctuary.

At ten o'clock, just as Dowling and Morgan had finished their report to their chief, a secretary knocked at the door of Baldwin's office and entered with a newspaper. It was an extra edition of the *Review* and the black type across the top of the front page proclaimed that the bomb-murder fiend had been caught.

Baldwin looked as if he was going to have apoplexy. He grabbed the telephone from his desk.

"Get me the *Review* office," he snapped into the mouthpiece.

Then the door of his office was again pushed open and Pat Knight stood smiling at the flustered detective.

"Well, Captain Baldwin," he laughed, "I've just turned your murderer over to the cops outside. He has confessed, so all you need do now is see that he doesn't get away. You can now dig the Mayor up from wherever you have him hidden. He's safe."

The rest of this scene couldn't possibly get by the censors.

LATE that night, Johnny Knight sat across a table from his brother, while they waited for their dinner to be served.

"Well, Pat," admitted Johnny, "you certainly flattened Baldwin. I'll have to hand it to you. It's a terrible blow to have to admit that a Knight has become a detective, but it helps some to think that at least you are a good detective."

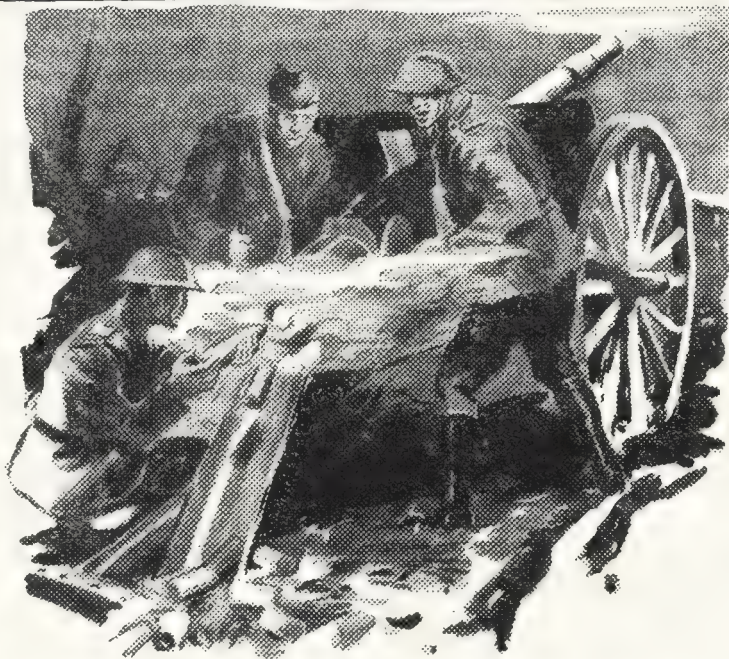
"Thanks," grinned the youngster. "You aren't so punk yourself—as an editor."

REAL EXPERIENCES

This gun-crew was sent forward at night to fire twenty-five rounds point blank—and get back to cover if they could.

By
**Charles
H. Watts**

The Midnight Sortie



THE crew of Number One Gun had just finished supper and had returned to the gun-pit. The moon was shining, casting weird shadows through the camouflage that was spread above the French 75, the pit and ammunition trench. All was quiet; no sound other than ordinary night sounds disturbed the peace of this beautiful night. The men of the crew sat or lay on the ground near the gun.

Nothing but the gun reminded us that there was a war on, and that at a range of thirty-seven hundred meters lay the trenches of the German front line.

The usual quartet was formed: Sergeant Blair, tenor; Loeb, lead; Wall, baritone; Sergeant Conley, bass. With voices pitched in a low tone, they sang the words:

"Call me back, pal o'mine, when you're lonesome,

Call me back, pal o'mine, when you're blue,
When your friends turn you down—"

"Attention, men." The interruption came from a figure standing on the edge of the gun-pit. It was the Captain's orderly. "Answer when your name is called."

"Sergeant Conley?"

"Here."

"Sergeant Blair?"

"Here."

And so on until twelve names had been called, my own among them. Not all of those whose names were called were present. Three or four of them were in the second, third or fourth gun-sections. "All you men whose names I called report to the Captain's dugout, *tout de suite*." We immediately proceeded to carry out this order, I, for one, wondering what it meant.

BUT it wasn't long until we knew what the detail was, for as soon as the orderly entered the Captain's dugout and reported, "They are all present, sir, and are waiting outside," the Captain came out and addressed us as we stood in a sort of semicircle in front of him.

"Men, I have summoned you here because I have a duty to perform tonight—a dangerous piece of work. I am proud that the Colonel has honored my outfit by choosing me and a picked crew to do it. You men were summoned because I have

picked you as the ones best suited for this work, because I believe I can depend on every one of you to do what you are told.

"We are going on a little trip up to the front, and we are going to carry along Sergeant Conley's little playmate the First Section gun. However, your name being called doesn't mean you are compelled to go. As I said, it's dangerous, and some of us may not come back." The Captain paused. "If any of you men would like to back out, you may. I want volunteers."

A minute's pause; then one of the boys said: "Let's hear the rest of it, Captain."

Undoubtedly the captain was pleased.

"Well, men, as you know, the line is only a short distance up; but we don't get much news from there. However, in this case the boys are in need of help and have called on the artillery.

"I won't go into full details; however, you must know enough so that you may be able to do your work right.

"Quoting the Colonel, it seems that over to the left of the lines is a six-gun battery of German 77's that are dropping a direct fire on our boys; and none of our artillery have been able to reach them to return their fire. Now, get this: Our line is facing northeast. This line is only temporary, as you know, and the infantry has no deep reinforced trenches. The men are dug in, in makeshift individual holes they have scooped out themselves. The line is along the edge of a wood. The ground gradually slopes down in front of them to a small stream, then up the other side to another wood. The Germans are entrenched in this farther line of woods. Several hundred yards of open ground lies between them.

"Half a mile to the left of our infantry on this side of the valley is where the six-gun German battery is hidden close under a bluff. They have a direct line on our infantry, but on account of their position under this bluff, our artillery cannot reach them. The front line curves back on our left, and the Germans are in force, well supported by artillery, in front of the Americans holding that sector. The battery I speak of is back of the German lines. Twice the allied infantry on our left have tried to break through the German line but have been repulsed. We are waiting for reinforcements to come up before we go over; and in the meantime this battery is doing a lot of damage.

"The Colonel's plan is to take a 75 up to, and through, the front line, tonight,

after the moon goes down—to place the gun in a position already marked out by regimental headquarters detail. We believe we have the exact range, and we have a direct fire—I may say point-blank fire. We can't miss them. We don't doubt our ability to silence that battery. The danger lies in our getting away before the whole German empire comes down on us with everything they have, for we will be right in full sight of their front lines, and will have no protection other than what God gave us. We will fire twenty-five rounds of H. E., and we must be back in the woods in less than one minute after the first shot is fired.

"Sergeant Conley, you will be in charge of the gun-crew, and I will give you the firing data before we leave. And Sergeant Blair, I want you to see to the ammunition, twenty-five rounds of H. E." (high explosive). "The rest of you men return to your sections and hold yourselves in readiness. We will leave here about eleven.

"And by the way,"—as we turned to leave,—“do not discuss this matter either now or afterward. That's all.”

AT about ten-thirty Sergeant Burke came up from the horse lines with the horses. He had a ten-horse hitch and a limber.

We had a half-hour to wait, and as nothing occurred during that time, I will give a little data for the benefit of anyone not familiar with artillery terms.

We were using French seventy-fives, practically the same bore as the American three-inch field-piece. Personally, I think the seventy-fives won the war. Regulations call for a six-horse team under ordinary circumstances, hitched two abreast. The first pair is the lead team, the second is the swing, and the third the wheelers. A rider or driver rides each of the near horses—that is, the horse on the left of each pair. The teams are hitched together with a leather-covered cable with short lengths of chain at each end.

The ten-horse team we used that night consisted of a lead team, and the regular wheelers; the others were all swing teams.

The maximum range of the seventy-five is about eleven kilometers, which is almost equivalent to seven miles; however, I can recall only one instance when the guns were fired at maximum range. Our average range was from two thousand to four thousand meters, and a meter is thirty-nine inches. It is very seldom that a gun-crew

is in sight of its target. More often it is firing over hills or woods, and depends on firing data furnished by officers from regimental, battalion or battery headquarters, who use range-finders and other instruments to get the range. This data is given to the sergeant in charge of each gun section, who in turn calls it out to the gunner and Number One; and in case of shrapnel fire to one of the ammunition detail, which usually consists of three men who stand in a narrow trench leading off from the gun-pit back of the gunner, who stands on the left of the gun facing the front. Orders are also given as to the number of shots to be fired per minute.

French seventy-five shells have a hole in the nose with threads inside. A fuse that resembles a screw or a machine-bolt of half inch—only having a blunt point with an inverted head—is inserted into the shell just before being placed in the gun.

When it is known that the infantry is going to advance at daybreak, the artillery preparation usually began about one o'clock with a slow cadence of five shots per minute, increasing after an hour to ten, and so on, until about an hour before the zero hour the guns fired just about as fast as the Number Two could put them in and Number One can get them out. On several occasions we fired over thirty shots per minute, but not for any length of time.

AT eleven o'clock the gun was dragged out of the pit, hooked onto the limber, and with the enlarged crew walking alongside, we started for our rendezvous with Death.

As we had only a short distance to go, it seemed just a few minutes until we were among the doughboys, who evidently were expecting us. As I said before, there were no trenches to interfere with our progress. The gun was hauled out into the open, and one of the men from regimental headquarters showed us the exact spot on which to place the gun. The horses were headed back toward the trees we had come through. The trail was lifted from the gooseneck coupling on the limber. The horses were moved a step or two away from the trail.

Then began the leveling of the gun and the setting of the quadrant and other details with which I had nothing to do. However, I do remember that the range given was eight hundred meters—just about a half a mile. In only a few seconds the gun

had been set, and the Sergeant called: "Ready, sir," in a low tone. Number Two placed the first shell in the gun, and the breech-block was closed. I tested it to ascertain if it was locked, then called: "Ready!" The extra men stood in a line to one side, with the fused shells in their hands, to be passed on to Number Two when he was ready for them.

The Captain glanced at a radium-dialed wrist-watch, carefully keeping it turned away from the German line; and after an awful pause he said: "Ready! Fire!"

Then, *bang! bang! bang!*—and on for twenty-five shots.

WITH every shot, the gun kicked back.

As the men passed the shells on and found their hands free, they took position at a wheel of the limber, or gun, or near the trail—not over it, for the barrel recoils forty-four inches every time the gun is fired. While a person could hold his breath, those twenty-five shots were fired. Then with men at the wheels of the gun, and the limber, and the trail, the limber was backed and the trail lifted. For a second a tiny flashlight played on the gooseneck as the trail-ring was dropped into it and locked. Then all hands gave a heave forward; the drivers put spurs to the horses, and away we went for the woods.

Cannoneers scattered and raced alongside the gun. In less than a minute after the first shot was fired we were running for cover. As we entered the woods, the doughboys in the vicinity cheered; and at the same moment hell broke loose, and Jerry sent over the whole works. Rifles cracked; machine-guns crackled; and seventy-sevens barked; flares were sent up; somebody started a gas klaxon, and then the Allied artillery opened up, and after going at a hard run back to position, we arrived in time to drop the gun back into the pit, change firing data and begin firing again.

At four A. M. came the command, "Cease Firing," and a bunch of tired cannoneers dropped on the ground and heaved sighs of relief. Nerves had been on edge for a while that night! As we rested, the Captain came by and said: "Well, boys, I think we silenced that battery, as the front reports no fire from them during the late barrage. The best part of it is, there was not a casualty in our crew. I thank you boys for your good work. The official time was twenty-five shots in forty seconds."



A Hand- to-Claw Battle

A father and son save each other's lives in a desperate battle with two pet bears which had become savage.

By Bryan Shults

ABOUT twenty-five years ago I was living in northern Louisiana, engaged in cotton-farming. The forests and marshes of the surrounding country still contained several species of wild animals which are now almost totally extinct in that State. A neighbor of mine had captured a pair of bear-cubs one spring and tried to raise them as pets. While they were small, they did make ideal pets for the children, and to watch the comical little rascals at play was well worth their care and expense.

But as they grew older, the female cub became ill-tempered and vicious, which, of course, had some effect on the disposition of the male. As a result they had to be chained or penned constantly when they were scarcely two years old, and no one but the father and the oldest son would dare try to handle them at all. At night or when the family was away, they were penned in an old log crib, which was seldom used, as part of the roof was gone and all the chinking had fallen from between the logs.

One Saturday afternoon my neighbor and family had gone to spend the usual half-holiday in town, but I was endeavoring to finish another bale of cotton before night, as the weather had begun to look

threatening and I feared rain for the coming week. My wife and twelve-year-old son were with me at the time, leaving no one at the house but Lucy, our darky cook. As I had a rather large acreage in cotton, I was, however, hiring quite a few negro cotton-pickers.

TOWARD the middle of the afternoon I sent my son to the house for some fresh water, with directions to turn his pony into the calf-pasture as he went by the barn.

A few minutes later I glanced up to see the pony bound away from the stables, crash through the gate and go galloping wildly across the meadow. I then heard a frightened scream, and knowing that something out of the ordinary was happening, I jerked off my cotton-sack and ran as fast as I could for the barn.

Dashing around the corner of the stables, I soon saw the cause of the pony's fright and the boy's scream. The two bears had escaped from their prison and were enjoying their freedom immensely. Probably attracted by the smell of Lucy's pre-Sunday cooking, they were prowling around the house and barn, and had attacked the boy as he came through the barnyard. Lucy was singing at the top of her voice and

was blissfully unaware of the terror among her chickens and the vicious attack upon her "honey-boy."

With all my strength I threw myself against the bears and succeeded in bowling them over and off my boy. I quickly picked him up and placed him in the hay-manger, with the fear that there was no life left in the torn little body. Turning to face the vicious assault now directed on me, I realized that my chances were slim without some sort of weapon.

"Lucy! Lucy!" I screamed, as I was forced back against the manger, striking out with clinched fists as though I were fighting men instead of two angry, snarling bears.

Lucy appeared in the kitchen door with a pan of doughnuts in her hand.

"Bring my rifle, quick! Hurry!" I shouted, as I went down under the rush of the two heavy bodies.

Instead, pan and doughnuts went high and wide, and Lucy virtually sailed out the door and toward the cotton-field, screaming like the siren of a fire-truck. Down the cotton rows she flew until she met the whole crew of pickers, who had stampeded toward the house after hearing her wild scream.

"B'ars done eat Massa and honey-boy bof up!" she wailed. "Done gone an' eat 'em bof plumb up!"

MY wife fainted on the spot. Leaving Lucy with her, the rest of the crew came running on to the house, only to stop at a safe distance and stand wide-eyed and gaping, without offering the least bit of assistance in any way.

I fought desperately, sometimes on my feet or knees, but mostly flat on my back. At no time was there a chance to run, for one or both bears had hold of me at all times.

Oddly, the male bear didn't seem as ferocious as the female, a fact that probably saved my life; for if he had been as vicious and intent upon killing me as the female was, I am sure I could not have lived to tell this story. While he seemed content with slapping and clawing, she was endeavoring in every way to eat me alive. So it was mostly upon her that I waged my hopeless fight.

When at arm's-length, I would beat her about the eyes and ears with my clinched fists, but when she would grasp me in one

of her merciless hugs, all I could do was clutch at her jaws or throat and keep those gleaming tusches from face and neck. It seems to me that I fought for hours, and with all my cries, pleading and threatening, not one of those negroes would come to my assistance. I even tried to go to them, but each time they would back farther away. It must have been the sight of so much blood that held them back, for by now I had received severe wounds and what clothes I had left were saturated with crimson.

SUCCOR finally came from the direction least expected. My son regained consciousness and strength enough to crawl from the manger, and I shouted for him to try to get my rifle. He staggered into the house, but failed to find the gun. Running as fast as he possibly could, he ran to the woodpile and grabbed the ax. He bravely came to within a yard of me and extended the weapon handle-first.

"Here, Daddy," he said. As I seized the ax, he swooned and fell, unconscious again. Tearing myself loose, I leaped backward, knocking the male over on his back. And as the female made her last vicious lunge, I swung with all my-strength and clove her skull clear to her shoulders. Falling with the force of my blow, my senses failed and I slumped to the ground. .

A dash of cold water in my face aroused me, and I opened my eyes to see my wife and boy at my side, though the latter was still unconscious. The female bear lay where she had fallen. The other bear was nowhere to be seen, and was, in fact, never heard of again.

I HAVE often marveled at the courage displayed by my boy. Torn and mangled as he was, it is a wonder to me that he ever regained his senses at all. But by his superhuman effort he brought a weapon that undoubtedly saved the life of his father during the minute that his brave little body responded to his shaken nerves.

The muscle on his right arm had been eaten completely off to the bone, and his whole body was pitifully scratched and bruised. But we both finally recovered after some time under the doctor's care, although we still bear innumerable scars which will prove to anyone the truth of my story.



Sent to capture a rebellious Filipino and his followers, this young army officer conducted a hazardous little campaign.

The Defeat of the Datu

By **Lt. C. C. Cordwell**

LIEUTENANT, you will take your company and settle, once and for all, that turbulent old scoundrel Datu Amay Macarintug and his band of followers. They were last reported near Datu Amboluto's *barrio* on the Ambol River. You know that country like a book, and you know a lot of these Datus and their followers. You are also familiar with the Hill Moro dialects, and I am depending on you to clean out this outlaw. You are authorized to hire thirty *cargadores*." (Friendly Moros used as carriers.) "Start early tomorrow morning. That's all, Lieutenant. Good luck to you."

And with these orders, given as I was standing stiffly at attention in front of the "old man's" desk in post headquarters at Parang-Parang, Mindanao, P. I., I was launched on what was destined to be a mighty interesting little expedition against that notorious outlaw Datu Amay Macarintug and his well-armed band of outlaws.

Promptly at six o'clock the next morning, with our thirty *cargadores* interspersed in the column to prevent their escape with their valuable cargoes should they fall for the temptation, we hit the trail for Datu Amboluto's *barrio*, Macallian.

Even for such excellent hikers as the na-

tive infantry, Barrio Macallian is three days' fast marching from Parang-Parang. The march proved uneventful—just up one hill and down the other side and then up another, perspiring from every pore under the fierce tropical sun and cursing the luck that sent us to Mindanao, the land of the Moro—until the afternoon of the second day out, when suddenly there was the sound of a shot from the brow of a hill about five hundred yards to our left front, and we heard the whine of a bullet.

Instantly the men, speeded up by the memories of previous costly experience, and hustled into place by their non-commissioned officers, took up the famous trail-rally formation of Moro warfare—rear rank men facing left and front rank men to the right, back to back, bayonets fixed.

AS we expected, before we were hardly formed to meet the rush, out of the tall rank cogon grass bordering the single-file trail jumped about eighteen nearly naked Moros, keen-edged krisses swinging, and dashed into the line, only to meet the steady, unwavering points of the bayonets in the hands of my little brown soldiers and to receive a withering volley, fired from the hip. This game of meeting the attacks

of the fanatical desperate Hill Moros was no new thing for my men.

Immediately the rush started, the wild-est racket broke loose, the excited yells of my men and the commands of their native non-commissioned officers mingling with the shrill, "O-o-o-o—ah bugay" war yell of the wild Malay tribesmen. Our trail-rally formation, the long rifles with their bayonets fixed, and the dauntless, superb little fighters behind them, proved too great a handicap for the Moros, armed as they were, with their keen wavy-edged krisses only; and in a surprisingly short time the skirmish was over.

After dressing the few minor cuts suffered by some of the men, we rounded up our *cargadores* from the jungle and resumed our march towards Macallian, where we arrived without further incident.

We established camp on a slight rise near the stream above the *barrio*, pitching our shelter-tents in the usual horseshoe formation, with the butt ends of large feathery bamboo branches staked down between the tents and denuded of their leaves, so that the thorny branches projected outward and formed a very effective barricade around camp against any night-prowling Moro in quest of a sentry's rifle and ammunition.

Datu Amboluto, who ruled over Barrio Macallian (*barrio* means *village*) was a good friend of mine, for I had had the good fortune to rescue his favorite son from drowning some years before, while he and his family, and I and my company, had been fording a river at the same time.

So, as soon as camp was established, over came Datu Amboluto and his head men, all arrayed in their best silk *sarongs*, and wearing their best ivory-and-silver-hilted krisses in honor of the occasion.

The Datu had brought along as a present for me several chickens, some *camotes* (native sweet potatoes) and some sweet corn. In return I gave him a handful of cigars and some small bags of salt brought along for just such an occasion. Salt is highly prized and hard to get in the hill country. We exchanged the ceremonious Malay handshake—our hands meeting forcibly and then, instead of moving them up and down as white folks do, we swung them from side to side, gradually elevating them, until, at the height of our reach, we broke them away and held them as high as we could reach, fingers extended. The ancient significance of this ceremony I have never

been able to learn, but no high-class Moro neglects it on occasions of ceremony, such as Datu Amboluto's visit to our camp.

THE formalities over, we seated ourselves on a log, lighted our cigars and exchanged the news and gossip of the coast near Parang-Parang for that of the hill country.

The Datu had brought along one of his sons, a cute little chap of about six years, and before the group took their departure, I got a can of salmon from the mess sergeant and was about to present it to the little fellow when the Datu interfered. The Moros are all devout followers of Mohammed, and of course pork or anything having pork or lard in it is forbidden. I assured the Datu that the can contained fish, which is much sought by all Moros, and also had my chief *cargador* add his testimony to this effect before the little boy was permitted to accept the present.

A rather amusing incident grew out of this occasion. Datu Amboluto had been told that if he would first heat the can of salmon in a pot of water on the fire and then open it, it would be much more palatable, but he evidently misunderstood his instructions, as he allowed his little son to place the can directly in the coals, with the result that it blew up like a bomb from steam-pressure after it had been in the fire about ten minutes, scattering hot salmon and ashes all over the room.

All of this occurred just after dark, and at first I was unable to understand what was going on and suspected an attack on the camp, but upon being informed of the true state of affairs by my chief *cargador*, Macarampa, I immediately dispatched my hospital corps detachment, with an adequate guard in case of a misunderstanding as to the explosion, to dress the burns of the Datu's son, who had been squatting on his heels, Oriental fashion, near the fire, eagerly awaiting a taste of the salmon, when the can blew up.

Next day, young Amboluto was proudly displaying his nice clean white bandages to his friends, and describing the wonderful taste of the salmon in the can that had been sent over to replace the exploded one, by the "white unbeliever" in command of the soldiers.

A big holy day celebration, or fiesta, was to start at Barrio Macallian on the next day, and already Moros and their families were pouring in over every trail

to take part, so I decided to remain in camp at that spot for a few days to see if we could not learn something of the whereabouts of the outlaw Datu Amay Macarintug from gossip of the assembled Moros.

The following morning the celebration of the fiesta opened with several pony-races; and I give you my word, these races were as much a series of running fights as they were races. Once the little stallions with their peculiar pack-saddle looking arrangements for the riders to cling to, got away, all rules were off, and the riders bumped into each other, slashed each other with whips, cursed each other and otherwise carried on the war until the finish line was crossed. Ropes with knots tied in them were the only stirrups.

Wherever one looked, there could be seen groups of gayly turbaned and costumed Moros surrounding a pair of energetically battling game-cocks. All Moros are inveterate gamblers and will bet anything they have, on any sort of game at all. They even bet their wives, and thus, at the finish of a game, the women concerned frequently belong to a new lord and master—and the master part of it means just that.

During the day there were several horse-races, pony fights between pairs of the vicious, half-wild little stallions, and fights between carabao bulls. The pony fights were particularly vicious and sanguine, and wrought the Moros, both men and women, up into a state of the greatest excitement, large stakes being bet on the results of the fights.

WE remained in camp that day and the next, without being able to pick up even the slightest information from the assembled Moros regarding the whereabouts of Amay Macarintug, and this was not due to sympathy for the outlaw, but to fear of the consequences. Toward evening, however, as I was going about camp making an inspection to assure myself that everything was in order for the night, I thought I saw something move in the jungle outside the barricade, and upon taking a closer look, caught a glimpse of a Moro's face.

The owner of the face was making eager gestures to me to come out to where he was hiding. I recognized him as a loyal Moro who had been wounded in the leg while acting as a scout for the American forces in the Datu Ali campaign in the Cotobato Valley, and who was a sort of pensioner about the post at Parang-Parang. He was

called Gimba, because of his wound having made him lame.

Upon arriving at the spot where I had seen him, I could find no trace of him, but from a position in better cover, farther back in the jungle, he attracted my attention by a short hissing noise, commonly used by most Orientals for that purpose. As soon as I had approached close enough to hear him, he said, "*Teniente*, Amay Macarintug *cotta*—big spring acrost Ambol Swamp—about hundred men—maybe fifteen guns. Adios, señor." And he was gone as fast as his lame gait would permit.

Immediately upon returning to camp I called my first sergeant and all of my duty sergeants together, explained the situation to them and told them that we would march next morning early, and camp in the afternoon within a mile of the border of the Ambol Swamp, and about two miles south of a point opposite Datu Macarintug's *cotta* (fort). Next morning early we would cross the swamp, employing a traveling bridge, a simple expedient known to the Moros and to most experienced campaigners in their country. It is constructed and used in the following manner: each man provides himself with a straight dry log about four inches in diameter by ten feet long, and two sticks having a fork on the end of each. The first man to reach the swamp throws his log down on the thick matt of grass which covers most of the swamps in tropical countries, and out of which other grass grows, dies and falls over, thus increasing the thickness of the grass matt. The soldier walks to the end of his log, balancing himself with his two sticks, the log sinking under his weight only slightly; the log carried by the man behind him is thrown or passed to him, laid on the grass matt, and so on, the last man in the column picking up the logs and passing them up the line.

THE swamp at the point of crossing was only about five hundred yards wide and contained several patches of more or less dry land, so it did not take the company long to cross after it once got started the following morning, before dawn.

The *cotta* was situated on a slight knoll in the entrance to a long valley leading in an east and west direction away from the swamp, and included within its walls, one of the Ambol springs, known to all hill Moros as a year around flow of good cool "ig" or water. The overflow from the

spring was conducted outside the walls of the *cotta* by a bamboo tube.

After a reconnaissance of the situation to establish the exact location of the *cotta* only, I having camped on the spot several times before on previous campaigns, I deployed my first platoon across the front of the *cotta*, parallel to the swamp and about two hundred yards distant, my second platoon parallel to its southern side and about the same distance up a slight slope, and my third platoon up at the timber line above the grass-filled valley, to the northwest of the *cotta* and about five hundred yards from it.

The scheme of attack was for all to remain quietly hidden until it became light enough to see to shoot. Then, I was to call upon Datu Amay Macarintug to surrender, which, knowing him as I did, I knew he would reply to with a burst of rifle-fire. My first and second platoons were to reply to this fire, and having beaten down, with our greater fire-power, the fire of the Moros, were to advance by short rushes and when close enough, to fix bayonets and take the *cotta* by storm. The third platoon, from its position, was to remain quiet until the garrison of the *cotta* broke under the pressure of the other two platoons and ran for it—if they did. Then the third platoon was to open fire on the bolters and cut them down, remembering our orders, which directed us to "settle them once and for all."

NOW there is most always many a slip between the plan of attack and its execution; but for some reason, the gods of war were evidently on our side in this case, and so it happened that shortly after it got light enough to see, the door of a nipa palm thatched shack standing on stilts above the walls of the *cotta* slid back and old Macarintug himself appeared, stretched his arms, yawned and seated himself on his heels at his door, little dreaming that the company of soldiers, of whose presence at Macallian he undoubtedly had news, knew how to cross the swamp and were at that moment ready to attack.

I was, at this time, sitting behind the trunk of a tree near the first platoon, with the first sergeant, who was receiving his final instructions, all other platoons being in position for the rise of the curtain.

Upon seeing Macarintug, the old first sergeant turned to me and whispered: "I shall kill, sir?" I nodded my head, and the sergeant quickly drew and cocked his

automatic, got his feet under him, and suddenly jumping up, threw the gun down on the Datu. But quick as the sergeant was, Datu Macarintug was quicker. He saw the sergeant as soon as he jumped up, and immediately rolled over inside the hut and disappeared. A moment later we saw him drop through a hole in the floor of his hut, a war-gong started its wild measured beat, and the fight was on. The sergeant had had time to fire one shot only and it had missed clean.

THE steady rain of bullets along the eastern and southern wall of the *cotta*, and the advance of the skirmish lines, soon convinced the Moros that their position was untenable; and noting that there was no fire on the northern and western walls, all the fighting men, Macarintug included, broke and ran for it down the valley.

The third platoon now got in its work, and very few of the outlaws escaped.

My company, with one exception, had fortunately escaped with very few injuries. Private Cabillon had happened unexpectedly upon a hidden Moro when we rushed the *cotta*, and had been almost completely disemboweled by the quick, powerful slash of a keen kriss, before he could defend himself from the attack.

A man from the third platoon came in, saluted and reported:

"Sir, Datu Amay Macarintug is shot. He is on the ground down the valley, and he like talk to you, sir."

I went with the soldier, and he soon led me to where the Datu lay upon the ground. Upon seeing me approach, the game old man, although shot through the body, smiled and said in the Maguindanao tongue: "The *teniente* had too many rifles for me, but it was a fight to gladden the heart while it lasted."

He was lying in the full glare of the hot morning sun, so I had some men erect shelter over him, and then sat by his side, helping him to drink from my canteen, until he reached out his hand to clasp mine, and together we went through the ceremonious Moro handshake. Almost immediately after this Datu Amay Macarintug, with a smile on his face—though he must have been suffering intensely—closed his eyes and passed on to his Allah.

So ended the misdirected career of one of the bravest fighting men that I have ever seen. We gave Macarintug a soldier's burial where he fell.



S. O. S.

Fitted with two thousand air-tight tanks, the Lucia was supposed unsinkable, but a torpedo destroyed her just the same. One of her gunners tells of their rescue by a gallant destroyer crew.

By John F. Conahey

IT was the night after the supposedly unsinkable *Lucia* was torpedoed. We had full confidence in the claims of her designer that the two thousand air-tight tanks between her decks and bulkheads would keep her afloat for an unlimited period. But the torpedo had struck squarely in the engine-room, putting out the fires and instantly crippling our pumps and dynamos. She would have remained afloat, at that, if a heavy sea had not sprung up overnight and battered a deckload of auto trucks about until they snapped their lashings and stove a hole in the deck through which the heavy seas washing over the deck found their way. After that, it was only a matter of hours before we had to abandon ship.

I was a pointer on the after gun, and my "Abandon Ship" station was with the crew of my gun on the starboard side of the poop-deck. When the word was passed for all hands to abandon ship, we found five civilians whose boat had been smashed by the explosion of the torpedo assigned to places in our lifeboat, thus placing seventeen men in a boat intended for twelve. Besides being dangerously overloaded, the crowded condition of the boat made it difficult to man the oars and almost impossible to bail out the boat.

An hour after we took to the boats, the *Lucia* turned her bow to the heavens and sank slowly by the stern, gradually disappearing beneath the waves. While she was afloat, we had kept her between us and the wind, and it was no trick to keep the boat

head on to the seas, but after she was gone, we had to row frantically to keep her headed. To make matters worse, there was a cross-sea running, and every time we went down into the trough of the sea, we would be deluged by another sea striking us broadside.

AFTER thirteen hours of grueling work, we were all exhausted. The seas were running higher and higher. Night had fallen—a moonless night, to add to our misery. Rockets sent up from time to time to keep in touch with the other lifeboats disclosed fewer boats each time, until finally there was nothing in sight but sky and water. We had no means of knowing whether they were afloat or lost. The night was cold—it was October 18th; but we were running in the Gulf Stream, and every time a sea broke over us it warmed us up somewhat.

We had abandoned all hope of pulling through, when out of the darkness loomed a four-stacker. From the lifeboat it looked like the *Mauretania*, but as it drew nearer, we made it out to be a United States destroyer. She had heard our "S. O. S." and had broken away from the troop-convoys to look for us.

She passed out of sight several times while circling around looking for us. At last she sighted us and commenced maneuvering to afford us a lee to board her. It took time, for she was rolling and pitching at alarming angles. In the meantime we

S. O. S.

rowed furiously and bailed away at a great rate to keep from being swamped. She finally came close enough to throw life-lines. There must have been fifty of them thrown. Every man grabbed a line. Some passed them around their waists and secured them; others just held on. I took a couple of turns around my arm and waited to be hauled aboard.

The next thing I remember, the lifeboat was picked up on the crest of a wave and dashed against the side of the destroyer, and I was dangling at the end of the rope. Another sea dashed me against the side of the destroyer, and I felt a terrific pain in the chest and my whole face felt numb. Swinging around in the air, the rope slipped from around my arm, and I lost my hold and struck the water.

I must have fainted from pain. They tell me that Charley Egues, one of the men in my boat who had been hauled aboard the destroyer, saw my plight and without hesitation jumped over after me. Fortunately for both of us, he was one of the men who had secured the line about his waist. The other end was secured to the rail with a clove hitch. Willing hands pulled us in, and I was taken to the sick bay with a couple of broken ribs and a broken nose, otherwise safe and sound.

We were all commended for devotion to duty, and Charley received a special commendation for heroism beyond the call of duty; but when they were handing out the crosses and medals, they must have overlooked the man who jumped overboard after a shipmate seventeen hundred miles at sea, for I didn't see his name on the list of awards.

Neither did I see the name of the skipper or the navigating officer of the *Fairfax*. They said it was all in the day's work, but just the same it was a marvelous piece of navigating, running four hundred miles under forced draft to our exact latitude and longitude, and finding us in the middle of the night, to say nothing of the seamanship displayed in rescuing five lifeboats and two life-rafts loaded with men, without the loss of a man. We presented a silver loving-cup to the ship's company in token of our gratitude, and it occupies a conspicuous place on the *Fairfax*. But perhaps the distinction of rescuing the survivors of the last American ship torpedoed during the World War was the real compensation to the crew of the *Fairfax* for their sleepless nights and extra watches.

The Hot Fuse

By
**Brooks
Davis**

BEING a mine geologist in this present day of cut-and-dried scientific operations is mostly a matter of hard work, with little of the romance or adventure that was connected with the mining game in the good old days of twenty or thirty years ago. However, we'll leave it to readers of this true experience whether there isn't yet a chance for hair-raising adventures and breath-taking escapes.

A few years ago while working as mine geologist for one of the larger copper mines in the Southwest, the writer had occasion to inspect an old connecting drift on the eight hundred level, between Number One Shaft and Number Two Shaft. It was some twelve hundred feet in length, seldom used, now that the main workings were several hundred feet below and mostly south of that point.

Records in the engineer's office told of a very rich vein of ore that had been worked out on this level, years before. Having opinions of my own regarding the possibility of a vein of this character of ore playing out entirely, I made several trips through this drift and examined the walls carefully for a trace of the old vein. My efforts were finally rewarded by the discovery of a very thin seam, a mere pencil-mark of this old vein crossing the drift.

A conference with the superintendent followed immediately. Much argument was required, and a trip down to look at my find, before the super consented to give me a crew of men to start work on this vein. A week's work disclosed the fact that the vein was opening up to the north. Good commercial ore was being taken from the new working, with every indication that a large ore-body would be encountered.



A geologist finds himself alone on the eight-hundred foot level of a mine—and discovers a series of charged drill-holes with fuses burning.

NATURALLY I was elated. It meant a feather in my cap. So I watched this work closely, and on the morning of my harrowing experience I left word at the foreman's office to discontinue work in the south working.

That afternoon I had some special work on the twelve hundred near Number One Shaft that kept me there most of the afternoon. But I managed to get away in time to get up to the eight-hundred level before shooting-time. (It was an iron-clad rule in this mine that no shooting should be done before four o'clock.) According to my watch it was just three forty-five when I reached the eight hundred. I approached the new working from the west, contrary to my usual custom of coming in from the Number Two side or from the east.

As I neared the place I could hear no sounds that would indicate the presence of the miners, and when I flashed my light into the new drift, I saw that the drills had been taken out. I concluded that some trouble with their drilling had prevented them from getting in a full round of holes, and that they were not going to shoot that afternoon. I stepped inside the new drift to take another look at the beautiful ore that was being exposed. Then a paralyzing shock of sudden fear held me for an instant.

The face of that drift was full of holes—and a charred end of fuse dangled from each hole. Instinctively I grasped a fuse—and found it hot. I was standing before sixteen heavily loaded holes which might tear loose the next second! Those miners had fired early, I thought with sudden anger.

For perhaps a second I was physically paralyzed, but my old bean was working. My first thought was that I might jerk out the fuses and thus prevent the blast, but that plan was quickly abandoned, as there were sixteen holes and I should very likely be blown to bits before I could get all of them. Then came coördination of mind and muscle. I ran.

Fortunately the drift was not in more than twenty feet. Making the turn into the old drift, I flung myself out of range of the flying rock just as the first hole cut loose. The concussion would have put an end to me then had I not had the presence of mind to fling my hands to my ears as I fell alongside the wall in the old drift. I was nearly out as it was, but could still do a little figuring.

It occurred to me then that if the foreman hadn't taken that crew out of the south drift that morning, I would be squarely in line with shots from that drift, which followed the angle of the vein and was not exactly opposite the other working. I also realized that if I moved my hands from my head while those sixteen shots were breaking in the north drift, I'd be a goner. I had to take the risk that the foreman had followed instructions in removing the crew from that south drift.

IN such condition as this it was impossible for me accurately to check the number of shots. One shot was intermingled with the next in a seemingly interminable roar. Thus I remained in a stunned condition for several minutes after the last shot.

The concussion had injured me more than I thought. After several torturing at-

tempts I managed to rise to my feet. My legs felt like rags under me. My head was roaring terribly, my nose bleeding from the effects of the concussion. My clothing was ripped to shreds, and the exposed parts of my face and hands were bleeding from a thousand tiny cuts caused by the terrific bombardment of flying particles of rock ricocheting from the opposite wall. I was dust-covered, and now beginning to feel the effects of the powder-gas which was billowing slowly out of the north drift. I *had* to move—to avoid being overcome by that gas. Dumbly I realized that I'd bleed to death if overcome by that.

Somehow, I staggered along in the darkness toward Number Two Station. My lamp was out, of course, and it did not occur to me then to attempt to light it. I had to keep ahead of that sinister pall of smoke that crept steadily along the drift behind me. Ahead some two or three hundred feet I could now see the lights in the main drift which led to the station. All the main drifts were lighted by electric lights. Also, I knew there was another cross-drift a few steps farther ahead, a ventilating drift which carried a current of fan-driven air south to the air-shaft. If I could make that before the smoke overtook me, I'd be safe from gas, anyway.

HOLDING to the sides of the drift or crawling when I fell, which was often, I finally reached the main drift and then the station. There was not a miner in sight on the station. The pumper, wiping and oiling his machinery, answered my weak hail and came very near falling down the shaft when he saw me. I saw his lips

move but couldn't hear a word he said. It was then that I realized that my hearing was gone.

When the pumper saw who it was, he put in an emergency bell for the cage, and then called for an ambulance on his surface telephone. He accompanied me on top with the cage tender, and while they and some men from the timekeeper's office stood holding me on a stretcher while they waited for the ambulance to turn around on the dump, I happened to notice a clock in the timekeeper's office. It was exactly four-thirty.

At the hospital they soon stopped the bleeding, and the doctors seemed optimistic about my hearing coming back. With pencil and pad, I explained what had happened. There was one thing, however, that I couldn't understand. I asked an attendant for my watch. It showed three forty-five. The thing was stopped when I reached the eight hundred level! Those boys hadn't shot too early, after all. On the contrary, they had been late with their shot and had used that as an excuse for not sending a man west to protect their shot.

They were all discharged at once, for overlooking this strict rule. But I felt more than a little guilty myself, for working with an inaccurate watch, and although I knew the men deserved what they got, I succeeded in getting them other jobs on the surface. . . . And I bought myself a new watch.

My hearing is still somewhat impaired, but when I am tempted to complain, I think: "What if I hadn't removed that crew from that south drift!"

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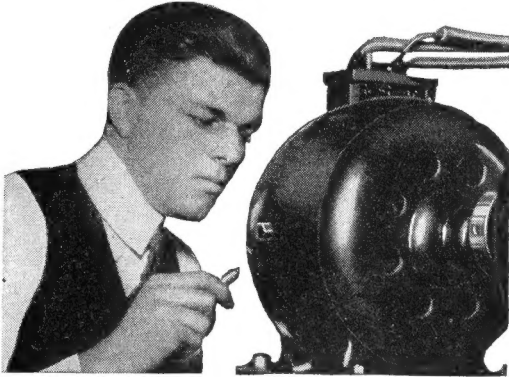
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"The Stolen Stampede"

*A thrill-crammed drama
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By REGINALD BARKER

AROUND a red-hot stove in the trader's store on Porcupine Creek a dozen miners were gathered one bitter night of the Yukon winter. One of them was singing:

*A Dawson City miner
Lay dying on the ice;
He didn't have a woman nurse,
For he didn't have the price.
But a partner stood beside him,
As the sun sank in repose;
And listened to his dying words,*

*And watched him while he froze:
"Take this little poke of dust
That I won from Shifty Mills,
To the girl I left behind me
Back in Deadwood in the hills."
The dying miner raised his head
Above six feet of snow—*

"Suddenly the door burst open, and framed against a background of driving snow, they saw a fur-clad man step into the room. In one bare hand he held a cocked forty-five revolver, in the other a bulging moose-hide poke.

"Every other man in the room raised his hands at the threat of that gun. But the newcomer said:

"I'm not here to make trouble, boys. Just came back to repay the gold I took. I've got lots of it now, boys—lots more where this came from. Look—I've struck it rich!"

"He reversed the buckskin sack, and a stream of yellow gold-dust poured onto the counter in the lamplight"

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